12.B.6

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

Existence and Attributes of God,

ABRIDGED

From the Writings of the late learned and venerable

STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

BY THE

REV. GRIFFITH WILLIAMS,

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THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY IS UNDERSTANDING.

Prov. ix. 10.

THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM THOU HAST SENT.

John xvii. 3.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

PREFACE

TO THIS ABRIDGMENT.

IT is readily granted that the exiſtence of God lies at the very foundation of all religion, and that it is abſolutely requiſite for thoſe who come to God to believe, that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him; therefore nothing can be more important or intereſting to the enquiring mind, than ſuitable ideas of that infinitely Holy Being, who is the alone object of religious worſhip, the Father of our ſpirits, and the God of all fleſh; for in proportion to the knowledge we have of God, we fear, love, and adore him; and as I have not ſeen any author who has exceeded, or very probably equalled, Mr. CHARNOCK, ON THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, I thought it might be of ſome ſervice (under the divine bleſſing) for the world to be more acquainted with his ſentiments; therefore I have endeavoured, according to the beſt of my judgment, to ſelect from the firſt volume of his works, the chief of his leading thoughts upon the above ſubjects, and what I conſider as the cream of his ideas; well knowing that the magnitude, price, and ſcarcity of his writings, are an unſurmountable obſtacle to their peruſal, in the way of common readers.

The

The above treatiſes, in my humble opinion, are of infinite value, and worthy of the ſtudy of all ſtudents in divinity, as well as of the ſerious attention of every chriſtian. The ſubjects are grand, ſublime, and beyond deſcription intereſting. What ſo fit for conſtant meditation, as the greateſt and beſt of all Beings, and thoſe tranſcendently glorious perfections with which he is clothed? Angels contemplate them with unceaſing raptures, and everlaſting pleaſure. The unſpeakable glory of a Triune Jehovah, as revealed to the unnumbered myriads of pure intelligences above, is incomprehenſible by mortal men; but thoſe parts which ſhine forth in his works of creation, providence and redemption, fall under the cognizance of his inferior creatures on earth; and theſe are in a great meaſure preſented to view in this admirable work.

Our author likewiſe enters deeply into polemical divinity; without rancour or railing, he eſtabliſhes truth, as the beſt method to confute error; with great learning and ability explains and defends the more diſputable doctrines of revelation, and with peculiar ſweetneſs, and holy zeal, expatiates upon the more practical; ſo that the learned and judicious may find high entertainment, and the vulgar abundant inſtruction: here the believer may view, with admiration and profound humility, the grand deſigns of infinite love, and how all the attributes of God ſweetly and wonderfully harmonize in the death of the croſs, and are diſplayed to eternal advantage in the goſpel of Chriſt; theſe truths cannot fail to warm and profit the ſpiritually minded,

and

and create in them an increaſing deſire to feel more of their genuine influence, that they may be conformed daily to the moral image of the Redeemer, and grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Chriſt, and thus be prepared to dwell in the beatific preſence for ever and ever. As to the manner how the above ſubjects are handled by the venerable Author, take the ſentiments of thoſe worthy men, VEEL and ADAMS, who publiſhed his works, "The dreſs is compleat and decent, yet "not gaudy or theatrical; the rhetoric maſculine "and vigorous, ſuch as became a pulpit, and was "never borrowed from the ſtage; the expreſſions "full, clear, apt, and ſuch as are beſt ſuited to the "weightineſs and ſpirituality of the truths here de-"livered. It is plain he was no empty preacher, "but was more for ſenſe than ſound; filled up his "words with matter, and choſe rather to inform "his hearer's minds than to gratify any itching "ears; in a word, he handles the great truths of "the goſpel with that perſpicuity, gravity, and "majeſty, which beſt become the oracles of God; "and we have reaſon to believe, that there is no "judicious and unbiaſſed reader, but will acknow-"ledge this to be incomparably the beſt practical "treatiſe the world ever ſaw in Engliſh upon this "ſubject."

The reader will find the author's reaſoning ſtrong, perſpicuous, and convincing; the arguments juſt and concluſive; the ſtyle good and nervous; the inferences pertinent and practical; and the

the Editor is fully perſuaded, that before the pious reader peruſes half of this volume, he will clearly ſee that ſo far from any exaggeration of the work in this preface, the half was not told him; for here the moſt precious truths are well explained, and therefore calculated to inform the judgment, enrich the mind, influence the affections, and lead forth the whole man in holy love and unfeigned obedience, to the great Author of eternal ſalvation.

Here let me ſtand and adore thoſe eternally glorious perfections, of the one God in three perſons; and whilſt enabled by faith to view them graciouſly diſplayed in the contrivance, execution, and application, of unmerited mercy to my guilty ſoul, and through the atonement of Chriſt all engaged for my everlaſting ſecurity, may it be my only and ſupreme ambition, to glorify God with my body and ſpirit, which are his; and from the deepeſt ſenſe of infinite obligations to diſcriminating love, devote myſelf to his ſervice, which is my higheſt honour, and the end of all my wiſhes.

I have taken no further liberty with the Author's ſtyle, than now and then to put in a cuſtomary word, inſtead of one that is become obſolete; for I conſider his language as not only intelligible, but pleaſant, even to a modern taſte; a competent judge of proper diction, paid Mr. CHARNOCK a fine compliment, when he ſpoke of him as defending the goſpel, "with his maſculine ſtyle, and an in-"exhauſtable vein of thought."* Conſiderable pains

* See Hervey, Dial. page 206, London edit.

pains have been taken to modernize the orthography, and thus to render the work more acceptable; not that I preſume to ſay that it is now altogether modern: for to extract the ideas of the author, and clothe them in a modern dreſs, was a taſk I did not think myſelf equal to; and were that done, in the opinion of many, the work would not have been ſo much the author's, as it is in its preſent form. As it ſtands it is particularly deſigned for common readers, who have but little time, and frequently leſs patience to read books, and who are ſtruck with deſpair at the very ſight of a large folio; but it may ſerve alſo as a remembrancer to thoſe who have read the original, inaſmuch as the principal thoughts upon every ſubject are carefully preſerved, in the ſame order that the author himſelf placed them; many of his ſub-diviſions, which appeared uſeleſs and rather perplexing, are left out, but the ſenſe is kept entire. There are, I acknowledge, many valuable reflections which appeared to me more remote from the ſubject, as well as ſome corollaries, inferences and uſes, altogether omitted, that the work might be reduced to its preſent ſize; but with an humble dependence upon the bleſſing of God, who accompliſheth the greateſt deſigns by the weakeſt means, and thus effectually ſecures the glory to himſelf and hides pride from man, I truſt, and ſincerely pray, that the work, even in this contracted ſtate (though it falls as much ſhort of the perfection as it does of the length of the original) may prove a ſeaſonable antidote

antidote againſt the increaſing prevalence of atheiſm and infidelity; or, at leaſt, eſtabliſh the minds of the wavering, and furniſh them with arguments to ſilence and confound their gainſayers.

I have not words, ſufficiently to expreſs my eſteem for the works of this amiable writer. I account it one of the greateſt bleſſings of my life, that providence put them into my hands; for the pleaſure and profit which I have derived from them was one of the chief motives in determining me to undertake this Abridgment. Having alſo conſulted ſeveral judicious friends, well acquainted with Mr. CHARNOCK's works, whether ſuch an undertaking appeared eligible, they encouraged my deſign. The chain or connection of ideas is ſo well kept up through the whole treatiſe, that few readers will perceive any thing wanting; and truly the work, in its preſent abridged ſtate, is a good *Body of Divinity*.

The only apology that I ſhall make for thus intruding upon the public is, that what I have done is with a ſincere deſire to ſerve the beſt intereſts of mankind. How far my intention will, in the mind of the public, atone for my failings, I know not. That the great Head of the Church may accompany the whole with his preſence and bleſſing, is the earneſt prayer of the reader's ſervant for Chriſt's ſake,

GRIFFITH WILLIAMS.

GATE-STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS,
JAN. 27, 1797.

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DISCOURSES, &c.

On the Existence of God.

Pſalm xiv. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD; THEY ARE CORRUPT, THEY HAVE DONE ABOMINABLE WORKS: THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD.

THIS pſalm is a deſcription of the deplorable corruption by nature of every ſon of Adam, ſince the withering of that common root. Some reſtrain it to the Gentiles, as a wilderneſs full of briars and thorns, as not concerning the Jews, the garden of God, planted by his grace, and watered by the dew of heaven: but the apoſtle, the beſt interpreter, rectifies this in extending it by name to Jews, as well as Gentiles, Rom. iii. 9; and verſes 10, 11, 12, cite part of this pſalm, and other paſſages of ſcripture for the further evidence of it, concluding, by Jews and Gentiles, every perſon in the world naturally in this ſtate of corruption.

The text then is a deſcription of man's corruption.

Firſt, Of his mind: *The fool hath ſaid in his heart.* No better title than that of a fool is afforded to the atheiſt.

Secondly, Of the other faculties. 1. In ſins of commiſſion, expreſt by the loathſomeneſs, *corrupt, abominable.* 2. In ſins of omiſſion, *there is none that doeth good:* He lays down the corruption of

 the

the mind as the cauſe, the corruption of the other faculties as the effect.

1. It is a great folly to deny or doubt of the exiſtence or being of God.—Or, an atheiſt is a great fool.

2. Practical atheiſm is natural to man in his corrupt ſtate. It is againſt nature as conſtituted by God; but natural, as nature is depraved by man: the abſolute diſowning of the being of a God is not natural to men, but the contrary is natural; but an inconſideration of God, or miſrepreſentation of his nature, is natural to man as corrupt.

3. A ſecret atheiſm, or a partial atheiſm, is the ſpring of all the wicked practices in the world. The diſorders of the life ſpring from the ill diſpoſitions of the heart.

For the firſt, every atheiſt is a grand fool. If he were not a fool, he would not imagine a thing ſo contrary to the ſtream of the univerſal reaſon of the world, contrary to the rational dictates of his own ſoul, and contrary to the teſtimony of every creature and link in the chain of the creation: If he were not a fool, he would not ſtrip himſelf of humanity, and degrade himſelf lower than the deſpicable brute.

It is a folly; for though God be ſo inacceſſible, that we cannot know him perfectly, yet he is ſo much in the light, that we cannot be totally ignorant of him: as he cannot be comprehended in his eſſence, he cannot be unknown in his exiſtence; it is as eaſy by reaſon to underſtand that he is, as it is difficult to know what he is.

The demonſtrations reaſon furniſheth us with for the exiſtence of God, will be evidences of the atheiſt's folly; one would think there were little need of ſpending time in evidencing this truth, ſince in the principle of it, it ſeems to be ſo univerſally owned, and at the firſt propoſal and demand, gains the aſſent of moſt men.

But,

But, doth not the growth of atheiſm among us render this neceſſary? may it not juſtly be ſuſpected, that the ſwarms of atheiſts are more numerous in our times, than hiſtory records to have been in any age, when men will not only ſay it in their hearts, but publiſh it with their lips, and boaſt that they have ſhaken off thoſe ſhackles which bind other men's conſciences? Doth not the bare-faced debauchery of men evidence ſuch a ſettled ſentiment, or at leaſt a careleſs belief of the truth, which lies at the root and ſprouts up in ſuch venemous branches in the world? Can men's hearts be free from that principle wherewith their practices are ſo openly depraved? It is true, the light of nature ſhines too vigorouſly for the power of man totally to put it out; yet loathſome actions impair and weaken the actual thoughts and conſiderations of a deity, and are like miſts that darken the light of the ſun, though they cannot extinguiſh it: their conſciences, as a candleſtick, muſt hold it, though their unrighteouſneſs obſcure it, Rom. i. 18. *Who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.* The engraved characters of the law of nature remain, though they daub them with their muddy luſts to make them illegible: ſo that ſince the inconſideration of a deity is the cauſe of all the wickedneſs and extravagancies of men; and as Auſtin ſaith, "the "propoſition is always true, the fool hath ſaid in "his heart," &c. and more evidently true in this age than any, it will not be unneceſſary to diſcourſe of the demonſtrations of this firſt principle.

The apoſtles ſpent little time in urging this truth; it was taken for granted all over the world, and they were generally devout in the worſhip of thoſe idols they thought to be gods: that age run from one God to many, and our age is running from one God to none at all.

The exiſtence of God is the foundation of all religion. The whole building totters if the foun-

dation be out of courſe: if we have not deliberate and right notions of it, we ſhall perform no worſhip, no ſervice, yield no affection to him. If there be not a God, it is impoſſible there can be one; for eternity is eſſential to the notion of a God; ſo all religion would be vain, and unreaſonable to pay homage to that which is not in being, nor can ever be. We muſt *firſt believe that he is*, and that he is what he declares himſelf to be, before we can ſeek him, adore him, and devote our affections to him: we cannot pay God a due and regular homage, unleſs we underſtand him in his perfections, what he is; and we can pay him no homage at all, unleſs we believe that he is.

It is fit we ſhould know why we believe, that our belief of a God may appear to be upon undeniable evidence, and that we may give a better reaſon for his exiſtence, than that we have heard our parents and teachers tell us ſo, and our acquaintance think ſo. It is as much as to ſay there is no God, when we know not why we believe there is, and would not conſider the arguments for his exiſtence.

It is neceſſary to depreſs that ſecret atheiſm which is in the heart of every man by nature. Though every viſible object which offers itſelf to our ſenſe, preſents a deity to our minds, and exhorts us to ſubſcribe to the truth of it; yet there is a root of atheiſm ſpringing up ſometimes in wavering thoughts and fooliſh imaginations, inordinate actions, and ſecret wiſhes. Certain it is, that every man that doth not love God, denies God; now can he that diſaffects him, and hath a ſlaviſh fear of him, wiſh his exiſtence, and ſay to his own heart with any cheerfulneſs, there is a God, and make it his chief care to perſuade himſelf of it? he would perſuade himſelf there is no God, and ſtifle the ſeeds of it in his reaſon and conſcience, that he might have the greateſt liberty to entertain the allurements of the fleſh.

It is neceſſary to excite men to daily and actual conſiderations of God and his nature, which would be a bar to much of that wickedneſs which overflows in the lives of men.

Nor is it unuſeful to thoſe who effectually believe and love him; for thoſe who have had a converſe with God, and felt his powerful influences in the ſecrets of their hearts, to take a proſpect of thoſe ſatisfactory accounts which reaſon gives of that God they adore and love; to ſee every creature juſtify them in their owning of him, and affections to him: indeed the evidences of a God ſtriking upon the conſcience of thoſe who reſolve to cleave to ſin as their chiefeſt darling, will daſh their pleaſures with unwelcome mixtures.

I ſhall further premiſe this,

That the folly of atheiſm is evidenced by the light of reaſon. Men that will not liſten to ſcripture, as having no counterpart of it in their ſouls, cannot eaſily deny natural reaſon, which riſeth up on all ſides for the juſtification of this truth. There is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God, as well as the ſcriptures are in declaring the nature of a God; there are outward objects in the world, and common principles in the conſcience, whence it may be inferred:

For God, in regard of his exiſtence, is not only the diſcovery of faith, but of reaſon. God hath revealed not only his being, but ſome ſparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. Rom. i. 19, 20. *God hath ſhewed it unto them*—how? in his works; by the things that are made, it is a diſcovery to our reaſon, as ſhining in the creatures; and an object of our faith, as breaking out upon us in the ſcriptures: it is an article in our faith, and an article of our reaſon. Faith ſuppoſeth natural knowledge, as grace ſuppoſeth nature. Faith indeed is properly

of things above reaſon, purely depending upon revelation: what can be demonſtrated by natural light, is not ſo properly the object of faith; though in regard of the addition of a certainty by revelation it is ſo.

The belief that God is, which the apoſtle ſpeaks of, is not ſo much of the bare exiſtence of God, as what God is in relation to them that ſeek to him, viz. a rewarder. The apoſtle ſpeaks of the faith of Abel, the faith of Enoch; ſuch a faith that pleaſes God: but the faith of Abel teſtified in his ſacrifice, and the faith of Enoch teſtified in his walking with God, was not ſimply a faith of the exiſtence of God. Cain in the time of Abel, other men in the world in the time of Enoch, believed this as well as they: but it was a faith joined with the worſhip of God, and deſires to pleaſe him in the way of his own appointment; ſo that they believed that God was ſuch as he had declared himſelf to be in his promiſe to Adam, ſuch an one as would be as good as his word, and bruiſe the ſerpent's head. He that ſeeks to God according to the mind of God, muſt believe that he is ſuch a God that will pardon ſin, and juſtify a ſeeker of him; that he is a God of that ability and will, to juſtify a ſinner in that way he hath appointed for the clearing the holineſs of his nature, and vindicating the honor of his law violated by man.

No man can ſeek God or love God, unleſs he believe him to be thus; and he cannot ſeek God without a diſcovery of his own mind how he would be ſought. For it is not a ſeeking God in any way of man's invention, that renders him capable of this deſired fruit of a reward: he that believes God as a rewarder, muſt believe the promiſe of God concerning the Meſſiah. Men under the conſcience of ſin, cannot tell without a divine diſcovery, whether God will reward, or how he will reward the ſeekers of him; and therefore cannot

act

act towards him as an object of faith. Would any man ſeek God merely becauſe he is, or love him becauſe he is, if he did not know that he ſhould be acceptable to him? The bare exiſtence of a thing is not the ground of affection to it; but thoſe qualities of it and our intereſt in it, which render it amiable and delightful. How can men whoſe conſciences fly in their faces, ſeek God or love him, without this knowledge, that he is a rewarder? Nature doth not ſhow any way to a ſinner, how to reconcile God's provoked juſtice with his tenderneſs. The faith the apoſtle ſpeaks of here, is a faith that eyes the reward as an encouragement, and the will of God as the rule of its acting; he doth not ſpeak ſimply of the exiſtence of God.

I have ſpoken the more of this place, becauſe the Socinians uſe this to decry any natural knowledge of God, and that the exiſtence of God is only to be known by revelation; ſo that by that reaſon, any one that lived without the ſcripture hath no ground to believe the being of a God.

The ſcripture aſcribes a knowledge of God to all nations in the world, Rom. i. 19. not only a faculty of knowing, if they had arguments and demonſtrations; as an ignorant man in any art hath a faculty to know; but it aſcribes an actual knowledge, ver. 19, *manifeſt in them*, ver. 21, *they knew God*; not they might know him, they knew him when they did not care for knowing him: the notices of God are as intelligible to us by reaſon, as any object in the world is viſible; he is written in every letter.

We are often in the ſcripture ſent to take a proſpect of the creatures for a diſcovery of God. The apoſtles drew arguments from the topics of nature, when they diſcourſed with thoſe that owned the ſcripture, Rom. i. 19. As well as when they treated with thoſe that were ignorant of it; as Acts xiv. 16, 17. And among the philoſophers of

Athens, Acts xvii. 27, 29. ſuch arguments the Holy Ghoſt in the apoſtles thought ſufficient to convince men of, the exiſtence, unity, ſpirituality, and patience of God. Such arguments had not been uſed by them, and the prophets, from the viſible things in the world, to ſilence the Gentiles with whom they dealt, had not this truth, and much more about God, been demonſtrable by natural reaſon: they knew well enough that probable arguments would not ſatisfy piercing and inquiſitive minds.

In Paul's account, the teſtimony of the creatures was without contradiction; God himſelf juſtifies this way of proceeding by his own example, and remits Job to the conſideration of the creatures, to ſpell out ſomething of his divine perfections; and this is ſo convincing an argument of the exiſtence of God, that God never vouchſafed any miracle, or put forth any act of omnipotency, beſides what was evident in the creatures, for the ſatisfaction of the curioſity of any atheiſt, or the evincing of his being, as he hath done for the evidencing thoſe truths which were not written in the book of nature, or for the reſtoring a decayed worſhip, or the protection or deliverance of his people: Thoſe miracles in publiſhing the goſpel, indeed did demonſtrate the exiſtence of ſome ſupreme power; but they were not ſeals deſignedly affixt for that, but for the confirmation of that truth, which was above the ken of purblind reaſon, and purely the birth of divine revelation: yet what proves the truth of any ſpiritual doctrine, proves alſo in that act the exiſtence of the divine author of it: the revelation always implies a revealer, and that which manifeſts it to be a revelation, manifeſts alſo the ſupreme revealer of it. By the ſame light the ſun manifeſts other things to us, it alſo manifeſts itſelf. But what miracles could rationally be ſuppoſed to work upon an atheiſt,

who

who is not drawn to a ſenſe of the truth proclaimed aloud by ſo many wonders of the creation?

Let us now proceed to the demonſtration of the atheiſts folly.

It is a folly to deny or doubt of a ſovereign being, incomprehenſible in his nature, infinite in his eſſence and perfections, independent in his operations, who hath given being to the whole frame of ſenſible and intelligible creatures, and governs them according to their ſeveral natures, by an inconceivable wiſdom; who fills the heavens with the glory of his majeſty, and the earth with the influences of his goodneſs.

It is a folly inexcuſable, to renounce in this caſe all appeal to univerſal conſent, and the joint aſſurances of the creatures.

It is a folly to deny or doubt of that which hath been the aeknowledged ſentiment of all nations, in all places and ages. There is no nation but hath owned ſome kind of religion, and therefore no nation but hath conſented in the notion of a ſupreme creator and governor.

1. This hath been univerſal.
2. It hath been conſtant and uninterrupted.
3. Natural and innate.

Firſt, It hath been univerſally aſſented to by the judgments and practices of all nations in the world.

No nation hath been exempt from it. All hiſtories of former and latter ages have not produced any one nation but fell under the force of this truth. Though they have differed in their religions, they have agreed in this truth; here both Heathen, Turk, Jew and Chriſtian, center without any contention. No quarrel was ever commenced upon this ſcore; though about other opinions wars have been ſharp and enmities irreconcileable: the notion of the exiſtence of a deity was the ſame in all, Indians as well as Britons; Americans as well as Jews.

It

It hath not been an opinion peculiar to this or that people, to this or that ſect of philoſophers; but hath been as univerſal as the reaſon whereby men are differenced from other creatures; ſo that ſome have rather defined man by *animal religioſum*, than *animal rationale*. It is ſo twiſted with reaſon, that man cannot be accounted rational, unleſs he own an object of religion: therefore he that underſtands not this, renounceth his humanity when he renounceth a divinity.

No inſtance can be given of any one people in the world that diſclaimed it. It hath been owned by the wiſe and ignorant, by the learned and ſtupid, by thoſe who had no other guide but the dimmeſt light of nature, as well as by thoſe whoſe candles were ſnuft by a more polite education, and that without any ſolemn debate and contention. Though ſome philoſophers have been known to change their opinions in the concerns of nature, yet none can be proved to have abſolutely changed their opinion concerning the being of a God; one died for aſſerting one God; none in the former ages upon record hath died for aſſerting no God. Go to the utmoſt bounds of America, you may find people without ſome broken pieces of the law of nature, but not without this ſignature and ſtamp upon them, though they wanted commerce with other nations; except as ſavage as themſelves, in whom the light of nature was as it were ſunk into the ſocket, who are but one remove from brutes, who clothe not their bodies, cover not their ſhame, yet were they as ſoon known to own a God, as they were known to be a people: they were poſſeſſed with the notion of a ſupreme being, the author of the world; had an object of religious adoration, put up prayers to the deity they owned for the good things they wanted, and the diverting the evils they feared: no people ſo untamed where abſolute perfect atheiſm hath gained a footing.

Not

Not one nation of the world known in the time of the Romans that were without their ceremonies, whereby they ſignified their devotion to a deity. They had their places of worſhip, where they made their vows, preſented their prayers, offered their ſacrifices, and implored the aſſiſtance of what they thought to be a God. And in their diſtreſſes, run immediately, without any deliberation, to their gods; ſo that the notion of a deity was as inward and ſettled in them as their own ſouls, and indeed runs in the blood of mankind: the diſtempers of the underſtanding, cannot utterly deface it, you ſhall ſcarce find the moſt diſtracted bedlam in his raving fits to deny a God, though he may blaſpheme and fancy himſelf one.

Nor doth the idolatry and multiplicity of gods in the world weaken, but confirm this univerſal conſent. Whatſoever unworthy conceits men have had of God in all nations, or whatſoever degrading repreſentations they have made of him, yet they all concur in this, that there is a ſupreme power to be adored. Though one people worſhipped the ſun, others the fire, and the Egyptians, gods out of their rivers, gardens, and fields; yet the notion of a deity exiſtent, who created and governed the world, and conferred daily benefits upon them, was maintained by all, though applied to the ſtars, and in part to thoſe ſordid creatures. All the dagons of the world eſtabliſh this truth, and fall down before it. Had not the nations owned the being of a God, they had never offered incenſe to an idol: had there not been a deep impreſſion of the exiſtence of a deity, they had never exalted creatures below themſelves to the honour of altars: men could not ſo eaſily have been deceived by forged deities, if they had not a notion of a real one. Their fondneſs to ſet up others in the place of God, evidenced a natural knowledge that there was one, who had a right to be worſhipped. If there

were

were not this ſentiment of deity no man would ever have made an image of a piece of wood, worſhipped it, prayed to it, and ſaid *deliver me, for thou art my God.* They applied a general notion to a particular image. The difference is in the manner, and immediate object of worſhip, not in the formal ground of worſhip. The worſhip ſprung from a true principle, though it was not applied to a right object: while they were rational creatures, they could not deface the notion; yet while they were corrupt creatures, it was not difficult to apply themſelves to a wrong object from a true principle. A blind man knows he hath a way to go as well as one of the cleareſt ſight, but becauſe of his blindneſs he may miſs the way and ſtumble into a ditch. No man would be impoſed upon to take a Briſtol ſtone inſtead of a diamond, if he did not know there were ſuch things as diamonds in the world: nor any man ſpread forth his hands to an idol, if he were altogether without the ſenſe of a deity. Whether it be a falſe or a true god men apply to, yet in both, the natural ſentiment of a God is evidenced; all their miſtakes were grafts inſerted in this ſtock, ſince they would multiply gods rather than deny a deity.

How ſhould ſuch a general ſubmiſſion be entered into by all the world, ſo as to adore things of a baſe alloy, if the force of religion were not ſuch, that in any faſhion a man would ſeek the ſatisfaction of his natural inſtinct to ſome object of worſhip? This great diverſity confirms this conſent, to be a good argument, for it evidenceth it not to be a cheat, combination, or conſpiracy to deceive, or a mutual intelligence, but every one finds it in his climate, yea in himſelf. People would never have given the title of a god to men or brutes, had there not been a pre-exiſting and unqueſtioned perſuaſion, that there was ſuch a being; how elſe ſhould the notion of a god come into their mind?

mind? the notion that there is a god muſt be more antient.

This univerſal conſent is not prejudiced by ſome few diſſenters. Hiſtory doth not reckon twenty profeſt atheiſts in all ages in the compaſs of the whole world: and we have not the name of any one abſolute atheiſt upon record in ſcripture: yet it is queſtioned, whether any of them, noted in hiſtory with that infamous name, were down-right deniers of the exiſtence of God, but rather becauſe they diſparaged the deities commonly worſhipped by the nations where they lived, as being of a clearer reaſon to diſcern, that thoſe qualities, vulgarly attributed to their gods, as luſts and luxury, wantonneſs and quarrels, were unworthy the nature of a God. But ſuppoſe they were really what they are termed to be, what are they to the multitude of men, that have ſprung out of the loins of Adam? not ſo much as one grain of aſhes is to all that were ever turned into that form by any fires in your chimnies. And many more were not ſufficient to weigh down the contrary conſent of the whole world, and bear down an univerſal impreſſion. Should the laws of a country, agreed univerſally to, by the whole body of the people be accounted vain, becauſe a hundred men of thoſe millions diſapprove of them, when not their reaſon, but their folly and baſe intereſt, perſuade them to diſlike them and diſpute againſt them? What if ſome men be blind, ſhall any conclude from thence that eyes are not natural to men? ſhall we ſay that the notion of the exiſtence of God is not natural to men, becauſe a very ſmall number have been of a contrary opinion? ſhall a man in a dungeon, that never ſaw the ſun, deny that there is a ſun, becauſe one or two blind men tell him there is none, when thouſands aſſure him there is? Why ſhould then the exceptions of a few, not one to millions, diſcredit that which is voted certainly true by the joint

joint conſent of the world? Add this to, that if thoſe who are reported to be atheiſts had had any conſiderable reaſon to ſtep aſide from the common perſuaſion of the whole world, it is a wonder it met not with entertainment by great numbers of thoſe, who, by reaſon of their notorious wickedneſs, and inward diſquiets, might reaſonably be thought to wiſh in their hearts that there were no God. It is ſtrange if there were any reaſon on their ſide, that in ſo long a ſpace of time, as hath run out from the creation of the world, there could not be engaged a conſiderable number to frame a ſociety for the profeſſion of it. It hath died with the perſon that ſtarted it, and vaniſhed as ſoon as it appeared.

To conclude this, is it not folly for any man to deny or doubt of the being of a God, to diſſent from all mankind, and ſtand in contradiction to human nature? What is the general dictate of nature, is a certain truth. It is impoſſible, that nature, can naturally and univerſally lie; and therefore, thoſe that aſcribe all to nature, and ſet it in the place of God, contradict themſelves, if they give not credit to it in that which it univerſally affirms. A general conſent of all nations is to be eſteemed as a law of nature. Nature cannot plant in the minds of all men an aſſent to a falſity, for then the laws of nature would be deſtructive to the reaſon and minds of men. How is it poſſible, that a falſity ſhould be a perſuaſion ſpread through all nations, engraven upon the minds of all men, men of the moſt towering, and men of the moſt creeping underſtanding; that they ſhould conſent to it in all places, and in thoſe places where the nations have not had any known commerce with the reſt of the known world? A conſent not ſettled by any law of man to conſtrain people to a belief of it: and indeed it is impoſſible, that any law of man can conſtrain the belief of the mind. Would not he deſervedly be accounted a fool, that ſhould deny that to be

gold,

gold, which hath been tried and examined by a great number of knowing goldſmiths, and hath paſt the teſt of all their touch-ſtones? what exceſs of folly would it be for him to deny it to be true gold, if it had been tried by all that had ſkill in that metal in all nations in the world?

Secondly, It hath been a conſtant and uninterrupted conſent. It hath been as antient as the firſt age of the world; no man is able to mention any time, from the beginning of the world, wherein this notion hath not been univerſally owned; it is as old as mankind, and hath run along with the courſe of the ſun, nor can the date be fixed lower than that.

In all the changes of the world, this hath been maintained. In the overturnings of the government of ſtates, the alteration of modes of worſhip, this hath ſtood unſhaken. The reaſons upon which it was founded were in all revolutions of time accounted ſatisfactory and convincing; nor could abſolute atheiſm in the changes of any laws ever gain the favour of any one body of people to be eſtabliſhed by a law. When the honour of the heathen idols was laid in the duſt, this ſuffered no impair. The being of one god was more vigorouſly owned, when the unreaſonableſs of multiplicity of gods was manifeſt; and grew taller by the detection of counterfeits. When other parts of the law of nature have been violated by ſome nations, this hath maintained its ſtanding. The long ſeries of ages hath been ſo far from blotting it out, that it hath more ſtrongly confirmed it, and maketh further progreſs in the confirmation of it. Time, which hath eaten out the ſtrength of other things, and blaſted mere inventions, hath not been able to conſume this. The diſcovery of all other impoſtures, never made this by any ſociety of men to be ſuſpected as one. It will not be eaſy to name any impoſture that hath walked perpetually in the world without

without being diſcovered, and whipped out by ſome nation or other. Falſities have never been ſo univerſally and conſtantly owned without public controul and queſtion: and ſince the world hath detected many errors of the former age, and learning been increaſed, this hath been ſo far from being dimmed, that it hath ſhone out clearer with the increaſe of natural knowledge, and received freſh and more vigorous confirmations.

The fears and anxieties in the conſciences of men have given them ſufficient occaſion to root it out, had it been poſſible for them to do it. If the notion of the exiſtence of God, had been poſſible to have been daſhed out of the minds of men, they would have done it, rather than have ſuffered ſo many troubles in their ſouls upon the commiſſion of ſin; ſince they did not want wickedneſs and wit in ſo many corrupt ages to have attempted it and proſpered in it, had it been poſſible. How comes it therefore to paſs, that ſuch a multitude of profligate perſons, that have been in the world ſince the fall of man, ſhould not have rooted out this principle, and diſpoſſeſt the minds of men of that which gave birth to their tormenting fears? How is it poſſible, that all ſhould agree together in a thing which created fear, and an obligation againſt the intereſt of the fleſh, if it had been free for men to diſcharge themſelves of it? No man, as far as corrupt nature bears ſway in him, is willing to live controlled.

The firſt man would rather be a god himſelf than under one: why ſhould men continue this notion in them, which ſhackled them in their vile inclinations, if it had been in their power utterly to deface it? If it were an impoſture, how comes it to paſs that all the wicked ages of the world could never diſcover that to be a cheat, which kept, them in continual alarms? Men wanted not will to ſhake off ſuch apprehenſions; as Adam ſo all his poſterity

are

are desirous to hide themselves from God upon the commission of sin, and by the same reason they would hide God from their souls. What is the reason they could never attain their will and their wish, by all their endeavours? Could they possibly have satisfied themselves that there were no God, they had discarded their fears, the disturbers of the repose of their lives, and been unbridled in their pleasures. The wickedness of the world would never have preserved that which was a perpetual molestation to it, had it been possible to be rased out.

But since men under the turmoils and lashes of their own consciences could never bring their hearts to a settled dissent from this truth, it evidenceth, that as it took its birth at the beginning of the world, it cannot expire, no not in the ashes of it, nor in any thing but the reduction of the soul, to that nothing from whence it sprung. This conception is so perpetual, that the nature of the soul must be dissolved before it is rooted out, nor can it be extinct while the soul endures.

Let it be considered also by us that own the scripture, that the devil deems it impossible to root out this sentiment. It seems to be so perpetually fixed, that the devil did not think fit to tempt man to the denial of the existence of a deity, but persuaded him to believe he might ascend to that dignity, and become a God himself, Gen. iii. 1. *Hath God said?* and he there owns him, ver. v. *Ye shall become as gods.* He owns God in the question he asks the woman, and persuades our first parents to be gods themselves. And in all stories, both antient and modern, the devil was never able to tincture mens minds with a professed denial of the deity, which would have opened a door to a world of more wickedness than hath been acted, and took away the bar to the breaking out of that evil, which is naturally in the hearts of men, to

the greater prejudice of human ſocieties. He wanted not malice to raſe out all the notions of God, but power: he knew it was impoſſible to effect it, and therefore in vain to attempt it. He ſet up himſelf in ſeveral places of the ignorant world as a God, but never was able to overthrow the opinion of the being of a God: the impreſſions of a deity were ſo ſtrong as not to be ſtruck out by the malice and power of hell.

What a folly is it then in any to contradict or doubt of this truth, which all the periods of time have not been able to wear out; which all the wars and quarrels of men with their own conſciences have not been able to deſtroy; which ignorance and debauchery, its two greateſt enemies, cannot weaken; which all the falſhoods and errors, which have reigned in one or other part of the world, have not been able to baniſh; which lives in the conſents of men in ſpite of all their wiſhes to the contrary, and hath grown ſtronger and ſhone clearer by the improvements of natural reaſon.

Thirdly, Natural and innate; which pleads ſtrongly for the perpetuity of it. It is natural, though ſome think it not a principle writ in the heart of man; it is ſo natural that every man is born with a reſtleſs inſtinct to be of ſome kind of religion or other, which implies ſome object of religion. The impreſſion of a deity is as common as reaſon, and of the ſame age: it is a relic of knowledge after the fall of Adam, like fire under aſhes, which ſparkles as ſoon as ever the heap of aſhes is opened. A notion ſealed up in the ſoul of every man; elſe how could thoſe people who were unknown to one another, ſeparate by ſeas and mounts, differing in various cuſtoms, and manner of living; had no mutual intelligence one with another, light upon this as a common ſentiment, if they had not been guided by one uniform reaſon in all their minds, by one nature common to them all:

all: though their climates be different, their tempers and conſtitutions various, their imaginations in ſome things as diſtant from one another as heaven is from earth, the ceremonies of their religion not all of the ſame kind; yet wherever you find human nature, you find this ſettled perſuaſion. So that the notion of a God ſeems to be twiſted with the nature of man, and is the firſt natural branch of common reaſon; or upon either the firſt inſpection of a man into himſelf and his own ſtate and conſtitution, or upon the firſt ſight of any external viſible object. Nature within man, and nature without man agree upon the firſt meeting together to form this ſentiment, that there is a God: it is as natural as any thing we call a common principle: one thing which is called a common principle and natural is, that the whole is greater than the parts. If this be not born with us, yet the exerciſe of reaſon eſſential to man ſettles it as a certain maxim; upon the dividing any thing into ſeveral parts, he finds every part leſs than when they were altogether. By the ſame exerciſe of reaſon, we cannot caſt our eyes upon any thing in the world, or exerciſe our underſtandings upon ourſelves, but we muſt preſently imagine, there was ſome cauſe of thoſe things, ſome cauſe of myſelf and my own being; ſo that this truth is as natural to man as any thing he can call moſt natural, or a common principle.

It muſt be confeſt by all, that there is a law of nature writ upon the hearts of men, which will direct them to commendable actions, if they will attend to the writing in their own conſciences. This law cannot be conſidered without the notice of a law-giver: for it is but a natural and obvious concluſion, that ſome ſuperior hand engrafted thoſe principles in man, ſince he finds ſomething in him twitching him upon the purſuit of uncomely actions, though his heart be mightily inclined to them:

man knows he never planted this principle of reluctancy in his own ſoul; he can never be the cauſe of that which he cannot be friends with. If he were the cauſe of it, why doth he not rid himſelf of it? No man would endure a thing that doth frequently moleſt and diſquiet him, if he could caſhier it. It is therefore ſown in man by ſome hand more powerful than man, which riſeth ſo high and is rooted ſo ſtrong, that all the force which man can uſe cannot pull it up. If therefore this principle be natural in man, and the law of nature be natural, the notion of a law-giver muſt be as natural as the notion of a printer, or that there is a printer is obvious upon the ſight of a ſtamp impreſt. After this, the multitude of effects in the world ſtep in to ſtrengthen this beam of natural light, and the direct concluſion from thence is, that the ſame power which made thoſe outward objects, implanted this inward principle: this is ſown in us, born with us, and ſprouts up with our growth; or, as one ſaith, "It is like letters carved upon the bark of a young plant, which grows up together with us, and the longer it grows the letters are more legible."

This is the ground of this univerſal conſent, and why it may well be called natural.

This will more evidently appear to be natural, becauſe this conſent could not be by mere tradition; nor by any mutual intelligence of governors, to keep people in awe, which are two things the atheiſt pleads; the firſt hath no ſtrong foundation, and the other is as abſurd and fooliſh as it is wicked and abominable. Nor was it fear firſt introduced it.

It could not be by mere tradition.—Many things indeed are entertained by poſterity which their anceſtors delivered to them, and that out of a common reverence to their fore-fathers, and an opinion that they had a better proſpect of things than the

increaſe

increaſe of the corruption of ſucceeding ages would permit them to have. But if this be a tradition handed from our anceſtors, they alſo muſt receive it from theirs; we muſt then aſcend to the firſt man; we cannot elſe eſcape confounding ourſelves with running into infinite. Was it then the only tradition he left to them? is it not probable he acquainted them with other things in conjunction with this—the nature of God, the way to worſhip him, the manner of the world's exiſtence, his own ſtate? We may reaſonably ſuppoſe him to have a good ſtock of knowledge, what is become of it? it cannot be ſuppoſed, that the firſt man ſhould acquaint his poſterity with an object of worſhip, and leave them ignorant of a mode of worſhip, and the end of worſhip. We find in ſcripture his immediate poſterity did the firſt in ſacrifices, and without doubt they were not ignorant of the other. How came men to be ſo uncertain in all other things, and ſo confident of this, if it were only a tradition? how did debates and irreconcileable queſtions ſtart up concerning other things, and this remain untouched, but by a ſmall number? Whatſoever tradition the firſt man left beſides this is loſt, and no way recoverable, but by the revelation God hath made in his word.

How comes it to paſs this of a God is longer lived, than all the reſt which we may ſuppoſe man left to his immediate deſcendants? How came men to retain the one, and forget the other? What was the reaſon this ſurvived the ruin of the reſt, and ſurmounted the uncertainties into which the other ſunk? Was it likely it ſhould be handed down alone without other attendants on it at firſt? Why did it not expire among the Americans, who have loſt the account of their own deſcent, and the ſtock from whence they ſprung, and cannot reckon above eight hundred or a thouſand years at moſt? Why was not the manner of the worſhip of a God

tranſmitted as well as that of his exiſtence? How came men to diſſent in their opinions concerning his nature, whether he was corporeal or incorporeal, finite or infinite, omnipreſent or limitted? Why were not men as negligent to tranſmit this of his exiſtence as that of his nature? No reaſon can be rendered for the ſecurity of this above the other, but that there is ſo clear a tincture of a deity upon the minds of men, ſuch traces and ſhadows of him in the creatures, ſuch indelible inſtincts within, and invincible arguments without, to keep up this univerſal conſent. The characters are ſo deep that they cannot poſſibly be raſed out, which would have been one time or other, in one nation or other, had it depended only upon tradition, ſince one age ſhakes off frequently the ſentiments of the former.

I cannot think of above one which may be called a tradition, which indeed was kept up among all nations, viz. Sacrifices, which could not be natural but inſtituted: what ground could they have in nature, to imagine that the blood of beaſts could expiate and waſh off the guilt and ſtains of a rational creature? yet they had in all places (but among the Jews, and ſome of them only) loſt the knowledge of the reaſon and end of the inſtitution, which the ſcripture acquaints us was to typify and ſignify the redemption by the promiſed ſeed. This tradition hath been ſuperannuated and laid aſide in moſt parts of the world, while this notion of the exiſtence of a God hath ſtood firm.

But ſuppoſe it were a tradition, was it likely to be a mere intention and figment of the firſt man? Had there been no reaſon for it, his poſterity would ſoon have found out the weakneſs of its foundation: what advantage had it been to tranſmit ſo great a falſhood to kindle the fears or raiſe the hopes of his poſterity, if there were no God? It cannot be ſuppoſed he ſhould be ſo void of that natural affection, men in all ages bear to their deſcendants, as

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ſo groſly to deceive them, and be ſo contrary to the ſimplicity and plainneſs which appears in all things neareſt their original.

Neither was it by any mutual intelligence of governors among themſelves to keep people in ſubjection to them. If it were a politcal deſign at firſt, it ſeems it met with the general nature of mankind very ready to give it entertainment.

It is unaccountable how this ſhould come to paſs. It muſt be either by a joint aſſembly of them, or a mutual correſpondence. If by an aſſembly, who were the perſons? let the name of any one be mentioned--when was the time? where was the place of this appearance? by what authority did they meet together? who made the firſt motion, and firſt ſtarted this great principle of policy? by what means could they aſſemble from ſuch diſtant parts of the world? human hiſtories are utterly ſilent in it, and the ſcripture, the antienteſt hiſtory gives an account of the attempt of Babel, but not a word of any deſign of this nature.

What mutual correſpondence could ſuch have, whoſe intereſts are for the moſt part different, and their deſigns contrary to one another? How could they who were divided by ſuch vaſt ſeas have this mutual converſe? How could thoſe who were different in their cuſtoms and manners, agree ſo unanimouſly together in one thing to gull the people? If there had been ſuch a correſpondence between the governors of all nations, what is the reaſon ſome nations ſhould be unknown to the world till of late times? how could the buſineſs be ſo ſecretly managed, as not to take vent, and iſſue in a diſcovery to the world? Can reaſon ſuppoſe ſo many in a joint conſpiracy, and no man's conſcience in his life under ſharp afflictions, or on his death bed, when conſcience is moſt awakened, conſtrain him to reveal openly the cheat that beguiled the world? How came they to be ſo unanimous

in this notion, and to differ in their rites almoſt in every country? why could they not agree in one mode of worſhip throughout all the world, as well as in this univerſal notion? If there were not a mutual intelligence, it cannot be conceived how in every nation ſuch a ſtate-engineer ſhould riſe up with the ſame trick to keep people in awe. What is the reaſon we cannot find any law in any one nation to conſtrain men to the belief of the exiſtence of a God, ſince politic ſtratagems have been often fortified by laws? beſides, ſuch men make uſe of principles received to effect their contrivances, and are not ſo impolitic as to build deſigns upon principles that have no foundation in nature: ſome heathen law givers have pretended a converſe with their gods to make their laws be received by the people with a greater veneration, and fix with ſtronger obligation the obſervance and perpetuity of them; but this was not the introducing of a new principle, but the ſuppoſition of an old received notion, that there was a God, and an application of that principle to their preſent deſign. The pretence had been vain had not the notion of a God been ingrafted: politicians are ſo little poſſeſſed with a reverence of God, that the firſt mighty one in the ſcripture, (which may reaſonably gain with the atheiſt the credit of the ancienteſt hiſtory in the world) is repreſented without any fear of God. An invader and oppreſſor of his neighbours, and reputed the introducer of a new worſhip, and being the firſt that built cities after the flood (as Cain was the firſt builder of them before the flood) built alſo idolatry with them; and erected a new worſhip, and was ſo far from ſtrengthening that notion the people had of God that he endeavoured to corrupt it; the firſt idolatry in common hiſtories being noted to proceed from that part of the world, the ancienteſt idol being at Babylon, and ſuppoſed to be firſt invented by this perſon; whence, by the way, perhaps Rome is

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in the Revelations called Babylon, with reſpect to that ſimilitude of their ſaint worſhip, to the idolatry firſt ſet up in that place. It is evident politicians have often changed the worſhip of a nation, but it is not upon record that the firſt thoughts of an object of worſhip ever entered into the minds of people by any trick of theirs.

But to return to the preſent argument: the being of a God is owned by ſome nations that have ſcarce any form of policy among them. It is as wonderful how any wit ſhould hit upon ſuch an invention, as it is abſurd to aſcribe it to any human device, if there were not prevailing arguments to conſtrain the conſent. Beſides, how is it poſſible they ſhould deceive themſelves? What is the reaſon the greateſt politicians have their fears of a deity upon their unjuſt practices, as well as other men, they intended to befool? How many of them have had forlorn conſciences on a death bed, upon the conſideration of a God to anſwer an account to in another world? Is it credible they ſhould be frighted by that wherewith they knew they beguiled others? No man ſatisfying his pleaſures would impoſe ſuch a deceit upon himſelf to render and make himſelf more miſerable than the creatures he hath dominion over.

It is unaccountable how it ſhould endure ſo long a time. That this policy ſhould be ſo fortunate as to gain ground in the conſciences of men, and exerciſe an empire over them, and meet with ſuch univerſal ſucceſs. If the notion of a God were a ſtate-engine, and introduced by ſome politic grandees for the eaſe of government, and preſerving people with more facility in order, how comes it to paſs the firſt broachers of it were never upon record? There is ſcarce a falſe opinion vented in the world, but may as a ſtream be traced to the firſt head and fountain. The inventors of particular forms of worſhip are known, and the reaſons why they preſcribed them known; but what grandee was the author of this?

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who can pitch a time and perſon that ſprung up this notion? If any be ſo inſolent as to impoſe a cheat, he can hardly be ſuppoſed to be ſo ſucceſsful as to deceive the whole world for many ages: impoſtures paſs not free through the world without examination and diſcovery; falſities have not been univerſally and conſtantly owned without control and queſtion. If a cheat impoſeth upon ſome towns and countries, he will be found out by the more piercing enquiries of other places; and it is not eaſy to name any impoſture that hath walked ſo long in its diſguiſe in the world, without being unmaſked and whipped out by ſome nation or other: if this had been a mere trick, there would have been as much craft in ſome to diſcern it as there was in others to contrive it. No man can be imagined ſo wiſe in a kingdom, but others may be found as wiſe as himſelf; and it is not conceivable, that ſo many clear-ſighted men in all ages ſhould be ignorant of it, and not endeavour to free the world from ſo great a falſity. It cannot be found that a trick of ſtate ſhould always beguile men of the moſt piercing inſights, as well as the moſt credulous; that a few crafty men ſhould befool all the wiſe men in the world, and the world lie in a belief of it, and never like to be freed from it. What is the reaſon the ſucceeding politicians never knew this ſtratagem, ſince their maxims are uſually handed to their ſucceſſors?

This perſuaſion of the exiſtence of God, owes not itſelf to any impoſture or ſubtlety of men: if it had not been agreeable to common nature and reaſon, it could not ſo long have borne ſway. The impoſed yoke would have been caſt off by multitudes; men would not have charged themſelves with that which was attended with conſequences diſpleaſing to the fleſh, and hindered them from a full ſwing of their rebellious paſſions: ſuch a ſhackle would have mouldered of itſelf, or been broke by the

the extravagances human nature is inclined unto. The wickedneſs of men, without queſtion, hath prompted them to endeavour to unmaſk it, if it were a coſenage, but could never yet be ſo ſucceſsful as to free the world from a perſuaſion, or their own conſciences from the tincture of the exiſtence of a deity. It muſt be therefore of a more ancient date than the craft of ſtateſmen, and deſcend into the world with the firſt appearance of human nature. Time, which hath rectified many errors, improves this notion, makes it ſhoot down its roots deeper and ſpread its branches larger.

It muſt be a natural truth that ſhines clear by the detection of thoſe errors that have befooled the world; and the wit of man is never able to name any human author that firſt inſinuated it into the beliefs of men.

Nor was it fear firſt introduced it.—Fear is the conſequent of wickedneſs. As man was not created with any inherent ſin, ſo he was not created with any terrifying fears; the one had been againſt the holineſs of the Creator, the other againſt his goodneſs: fear did not make this opinion, but the opinion of the being of a deity was the cauſe of this fear, after his ſenſe of angrying the deity by his wickedneſs. The object of fear is before the act of fear; there could not be an act of fear exerciſed about the deity, till it was believed to be exiſtent, and not only ſo, but offended: for God as exiſtent only, is not the object of fear or love; it is not the exiſtence of a thing that excites any of thoſe affections, but the relation a thing bears to us in particular. God is good, and ſo the object of love, as well as juſt, and thereby the object of fear. He was as much called Love, and *Mens* or Mind, in regard of his goodneſs and underſtanding, by the heathens, as much as by any other name. Neither of thoſe names were proper to inſinuate fear; neither was fear the firſt principle that made

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the heathens worſhip a God; they offered ſacrifices, out of gratitude to ſome, as well as to others out of fear; the fear of evils in the world, and the hopes of relief and aſſiſtance from their gods, and not a terrifying fear of God, was the principal ſpring of their worſhip. When calamities from the hands of men, or judgments by the influence of heaven, were upon them, they implored that which they thought a deity: it was not their fear of him, but a hope in his goodneſs and perſuaſion of remedy from him, for the averting thoſe evils that rendered them adorers of a God. If they had not had pre-exiſtent notions of his being and goodneſs, they would never have made addreſſes to him, or ſo frequently ſought to that they only apprehended as a terrifying object. When you hear men calling upon God in a time of affrighting thunder, you cannot imagine that the fear of thunder did firſt introduce the notion of a God, but implies that it was before apprehended by them, or ſtampt upon them, though their fear doth at preſen actuate that belief, and engage them in a preſent exerciſe of piety: and whe eas the ſcripture ſaith, *The fear of God is the beginning of wiſdom*, or of all religion; it is not underſtood of a diſtracted and terrifying fear, but a reverential fear of him, becauſe of his holineſs; or a worſhip of him, ſubmiſſion to him, and ſincere ſeek ng of him.

Well then, is it not a folly for an atheiſt to deny that which is the reaſon and common ſentiment of the whole world? to ſtrip himſelf of humanity, run counter to his own conſcience, prefer a private before an univerſal judgment, give the lie to his own nature and reaſon, aſſert things impoſſible to be proved, nay impoſſible to be acted, forge irrationalities for the ſupport of his fancy, againſt the common perſuaſion of the world and againſt himſelf, and ſo much of God as is manifeſt in him and every man?

It is a folly to deny that which all creatures or all

all things in the world manifeſt. Let us view this in ſcripture ſince we acknowledge it, and after conſider the arguments from natural reaſon.

The apoſtle reſolves it, Rom. i. 19, 20. *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, ſo that they are without excuſe.* They know, or might know, by the things that were made, the eternity and power of God; their ſenſe might take a circuit about every object, and their minds collect the being, and ſomething of the perfections of the deity. The firſt diſcourſe of the mind upon the ſight of a delicate piece of workmanſhip, is the concluſion of the being of an artificer and the admiration of his ſkill and induſtry. The apoſtle doth not ſay, the inviſible things of God are believed, or they have an opinion of them, but they are ſeen and clearly ſeen: they are like cryſtal glaſſes which give a clear repreſentation of the exiſtence of a deity, like that mirror reported to be in a temple in Arcadia which repreſented to the ſpectator, not his own face, but the image of that deity which he worſhipped.

The whole world is like a looking glaſs, which whole and entire, repreſents the image of God; and every broken piece of it, every little ſhred of a creature doth the like; not only the great ones, elephants and the leviathan, but ants, flies, worms, whoſe bodies rather than names we know: The greater cattle and the creeping things, Gen. i. 24. Not naming there any intermediate creature, to direct us to view him in the ſmaller letters, as well as the greater characters of the world. His name is glorious, and his attributes are excellent in all the earth, in every creature, as the glory of the ſun is in every beam and ſmaller flaſh; he is ſeen in every inſect, in every ſpire of graſs: the voice of the Creator is in the moſt contemptible creature—the apoſtle adds that they are ſo clearly ſeen, that men are inexcuſable

ſable if they have not ſome knowledge of God by them; if they might not certainly know them, they might have ſome excuſe: ſo that his exiſtence is not only probably but demonſtratively proved from the things of the world.

Eſpecially the heavens declare him, which God *ſtretches out like a curtain*; or as ſome render the word, a *ſkin*; whereby is ſignified, that heaven is as an open book, which was anciently made of the ſkins of beaſts, that by the knowledge of them we may be taught the knowledge of God. Where ſcripture was not revealed the world ſerved for a witneſs of a God; whatever arguments the ſcripture uſes to prove it, are drawn from nature, (though indeed it doth not ſo much prove as ſuppoſe the exiſtence of a God); but what arguments it uſes are from the creatures, and particularly the heavens, which are the public preachers of this doctrine: the breath of God ſounds to all the world through thoſe organ-pipes: his being is viſible in their exiſtence, his wiſdom in their frame, his power in their motion, his goodneſs in their uſefulneſs: they have a voice, and their voice is as intelligible as any common language; and thoſe are ſuch plain heralds of a deity, that the heathen miſtook them for deities, and gave them a particular adoration which was due to that God they declared. The firſt idolatry ſeems to be of thoſe heavenly bodies, which began probably in the time of Nimrod. In Job's time it is certain they admired the glory of the ſun, and the brightneſs of the moon, not without kiſſing their hands, as a ſign of adoration. It is evident a man may as well doubt whether there be a ſun when he ſees his beams gilding the earth, as doubt whether there be a God when he ſees his works ſpread in the world.

The things in the world declare the exiſtence of a God. 1. In their production. 2. Harmony. 3. Preſervation. 4. Anſwering their ſeveral ends.

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In their production. The declaration of the exiſtence of God was the chief end for which they were created, that the notion of a ſupreme and independent eternal being, might eaſier incur into the active underſtanding of man, from the objects of ſenſe diſperſed in every corner of the world, that he might pay a homage and devotion to the Lord of all. Iſa. xl. 12, 13, 18, 19, &c. *Have you not underſtood from the foundation of the earth, it is he that ſits upon the circle of the heaven,* &c. How could this great heap be brought into being, unleſs a God had framed it? Every plant, every atom, as well as every ſtar, at the firſt meeting whiſpers this in our ears—I have a creator, I am a witneſs to a deity. Who ever ſaw ſtatues or pictures, but preſently thinks of a ſtatuary and limner? Who beholds garments, ſhips or houſes, but underſtands there was a weaver, a carpenter, an architect? Who can caſt his eyes about the world, but muſt think of that power that formed it, and that the goodneſs which appears in the formation of it hath a perfect reſidence in ſome being? Thoſe things that are good muſt flow from ſomething perfectly good: that which is chief in any kind is the cauſe of all that kind. Fire which is moſt hot, is the cauſe of all things which are hot. There is ſome being therefore which is the cauſe of all that perfection, which is in the creature; and this is God. All things that are, demonſtrate ſomething from whence they are. All things have a contracted perfection and what they have is communicated to them. Perfections are parcelled out among ſeveral creatures. Any thing that is imperfect cannot exiſt of itſelf. We are led therefore by them to conſider a fountain which bubbles up in all perfection; a hand which diſtributes thoſe ſeveral degrees of being and perfection to what we ſee; we ſee that which is imperfect, our minds conclude ſomething perfect to exiſt before it; our eye ſees the ſtreams, but our underſtanding riſeth to the head: as the eye

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ſees the ſhadow, but the underſtanding informs us whether it be the the ſhadow of a man, or of a beaſt.

God hath given us ſenſe to behold the objects in the world, and underſtanding to reaſon his exiſtence from them; the underſtanding cannot conceive a thing to have made itſelf; this is againſt all reaſon. As they are made they ſpake out a maker; and cannot be a trick of chance, ſince they are made with ſuch an immenſe wiſdom, that is too big for the graſp of all human underſtanding. Thoſe that doubt whither the exiſtence of God be an implanted principle, yet agree that the effects in the world lead to a ſupreme and univerſal cauſe; and that if we have not the knowledge of it rooted in our natures, yet we have it by diſcourſe, ſince by all maſters of reaſon a *proceſſus in infinitum* muſt be accounted impoſſible in ſubordinate cauſes.

This will appear in ſeveral things.

The world was not eternal or from eternity. The matter of the world cannot be eternal. Matter cannot ſubſiſt without form, nor put on any form without the action of ſome cauſe; this cauſe muſt be in being before it acted; that which is not cannot act. The cauſe of the world muſt neceſſarily exiſt before any matter was endued with any form; that therefore cannot be eternal before which another did ſubſiſt; if it were from eternity it would not be ſubject to mutation: if the whole was from eternity why not alſo the parts, what makes the changes ſo viſible then, if eternity would exempt it from mutability?

Time cannot be infinite, and therefore the world not eternal; all motion hath its beginning, if it were otherwiſe, we muſt ſay the number of heavenly revolutions of days and nights, which are paſt to this inſtant, is actually infinite, which cannot be in nature: If it were ſo, it muſt needs be granted, that a part is equal to the whole: becauſe infinite being equal to infinite, the number of days paſt in all

all ages to the beginning of one year being infinite, as they would be, ſuppoſing the world had no beginning, would by conſequence be equal to the number of days, which ſhall paſs to the end of the next; whereas that number of days paſt is indeed but a part, and ſo a part would be equal to the whole.

Generations of men, animals and plants could not be from eternity. If any man ſay the world was from eternity, then there muſt be propagations of living creatures in the ſame manner as are at this day: for without this the world could not conſiſt; what we ſee now done muſt have been perpetually done, if it be done by a neceſſity of nature: but we ſee nothing now that doth ariſe but a mutual propagation from another: if the world were eternal therefore, it muſt be ſo in all eternity: take any particular ſpecies, ſuppoſe a man, if men were from eternity, then there were perpetual generations, ſome were born into the world and ſome died: now the natural condition of generation is, that a man doth not generate a man, nor a ſheep a lamb, as ſoon as ever itſelf is brought into the world, but get ſtrength and vigour by degrees, and muſt arrive to a certain ſtated age before they can produce the like, for whilſt any thing is little and below the due age, it cannot increaſe its kind; men therefore and other creatures did propagate their kind, by the ſame law, not as ſoon as ever they were born, but in the interval of ſome time, and children grew up by degrees in the mothers womb till they were fit to be brought forth: if this be ſo, then there could not be an eternal ſucceſſion of propagating: for there is no eternal continuation of time: time is always to be conceived as having one part before another: but that perpetuity of nativities is always after ſome time, wherein it could not be for the weakneſs of age: if no man then can conceive a propagation from eternity, there muſt be then a

beginning of generation in time, and conſequently the creatures were made in time.

If the world were eternal, it muſt have been in the ſame poſture as it is now, in a ſtate of generation and corruption; and ſo corruption muſt have been as eternal as generation, and then things that do generate and corrupt muſt have eternally been and eternally not have been: there muſt be ſome firſt way to ſet generation on work. We muſt loſe ourſelves in our conceptions; we cannot conceive a father before a child, as well as we cannot conceive a child before a father: and reaſon is quite bewildered, and cannot return into a right way of conception, till it conceive one firſt of every kind: one firſt man, one firſt animal, one firſt plant from whence others do proceed. The argument is unanſwerable, and the wiſeſt atheiſt (if any atheiſt can be called wiſe) cannot unlooſe the knot. We muſt come to ſomething, that is firſt in every kind, and this firſt muſt have a cauſe, not of the ſame kind, but infinite and independent; otherwiſe men run into inconceivable labyrinths and contradictions.

Man, the nobleſt creature upon earth, hath a beginning. No man in the world but was ſome years ago no man. If every man we ſee had a beginning, then the firſt man had alſo a beginning, then the world had a beginning: for the earth which was made for the uſe of man, had wanted that end for which it was made. We muſt pitch upon ſome one man that was unborn, that firſt man muſt either be eternal, that cannot be, for he that hath no beginning hath no end: or muſt ſpring out of the earth as plants and trees do: that cannot be: why ſhould not the earth produce men to this day, as it doth plants and trees? he was therefore made; and whatſoever is made hath ſome cauſe that made it, which is God. If the world were uncreated, it were then immutable, but every creature upon the earth is in a continual flux, always changing: if

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things be mutable, they were created; if created they were made by ſome author; whatſoever hath a beginning, muſt have a maker, if the world hath a beginning, there was then a time when it was not; it muſt have ſome cauſe to produce it. That which makes is before that which is made, and this is God.

Secondly, As the production of the world, ſo the harmony of all the parts of it declare the being and wiſdom of a God. Without acknowledging God, the atheiſt can give no account of thoſe things: the multitude, elegancy, variety, and beauty of all things are ſteps whereby to aſcend to one fountain and original of them.

Is it not folly to deny the being of a wiſe agent, who ſparkles in the beauty and motions of the heavens, rides upon the wings of the wind, and is writ upon the flowers and fruits of plants. As the cauſe is known by the effects, ſo the wiſdom of the cauſe is known by the elegancy of the work, and the proportion of the parts to one another. Who can imagine the world could be raſhly made, and without conſultation, which in every part of it is ſo artificially framed? No work of art ſprings up of its own accord. The world is framed by an excellent art, and therefore made by ſome ſkilful artiſt: as we hear not a melodious inſtrument but we conclude there is a muſician that touches it, as well as ſome ſkilful hand that framed and diſpoſed it for thoſe leſſons; and no man that hears the pleaſant ſound of a lute, but will fix his thoughts, not upon the inſtrument itſelf, but upon the ſkill of the artiſt that made it, and the art of the muſician that ſtrikes it, though he ſhould not ſee the firſt when he ſaw the lute, nor ſee the other when he hears the harmony: ſo a rational creature confines not his thoughts to his ſenſe, when he ſees the ſun in its glory and the moon walking in its brightneſs; but riſeth up in a contemplation and admiration of that

infinite Spirit that compoſed and filled them with ſuch ſweetneſs.

This appears in the linking contrary qualities together, and in the ſubſerviency of one thing to another.

All things are compounded of the elements. Thoſe are endued with contrary qualities, drineſs and moiſture, heat and cold. Theſe would always be contending with and infeſting one another's rights, till the conteſt ended in the deſtruction of one or both: where fire is predominant, it would ſuck up the water, where water is prevalent, it would quench the fire; the heat would wholly expel the cold, or the cold overpower the heat; yet we ſee them chained or linked one within another in every body upon the earth, and rendering mutual offices for the benefit of that body wherein they are ſeated, and all conſpiring together, in their particular quarrels, for the public intereſt of the body. How could thoſe contraries, which of themſelves obſerve no order, that are always preying upon one another, jointly accord together of themſelves, for one common end, if they were not linked in a common band, and reduced to that order by ſome incomprehenſible wiſdom and power, which keeps a hand upon them, orders their motions and directs their events, and makes them friendly paſs into one another's natures? Confuſion had been the reſult of the diſcord and diverſity of their natures. No compoſition could have been of thoſe conflicting qualities for the frame of any body, nor any harmony aroſe from ſo many jarring ſtrings, if they had not been reduced, into concord by one that is ſupreme Lord over them, and knows how to diſpoſe their varieties and enmities for the public good. If a man ſhould ſee a large city or country, conſiſting of great multitudes of men of different tempers, full of frauds, factions, and animoſities in their natures againſt one another, yet living together in good order and peace,

peace, without oppreſſing and invading one another, and joining together for the public good, he would preſenty conclude, there were ſome excellent governor, who tempered them by his wiſdom, and preſerved the public peace, though he had never yet beheld him with his eye. It is as neceſſary to conclude a God, who moderates the contrarieties in the world; as to conclude a wiſe prince who overrules the contrary diſpoſitions in a ſtate, making every one to keep his own bounds and confines. Things that are contrary to one another ſubſiſt in an admirable order.

All the members of living creatures are curiouſly fitted for the ſervice of one another, deſtined to a particular end, and endued with a virtue to attain that end, and ſo diſtinctly placed, that one is no hinderance to the other in its operations. Is not this more admirable than to be the work of chance, which is incapable to ſettle ſuch an order and fix particular and general ends, cauſing an exact correſpondency of all the parts with one another, and every part to conſpire together for one common end? One thing is fitted for another; the eye is fitted for the ſun, and the ſun fitted for the eye. Several ſorts of food are fitted for ſeveral creatures, and thoſe creatures fitted with organs for the partaking that food.

All this ſubſerviency of creatures centers in man. Other creatures are ſerved by thoſe things as well as ourſelves, and they are provided for their nouriſhment and refreſhment as well as ours; yet both they and all creatures meet in man as lines in their centers: things that have no life or ſenſe are made for thoſe that have both life and ſenſe, and thoſe that have life and ſenſe are made for thoſe that are endued with reaſon. When the Pſalmiſt admiringly conſiders the heavens, moon and ſtars, he intimates man to be the end for which they were created, Pſa. viii. 3, 4. *What is man that thou art*

mindful of him? He expreſſeth more particularly the dominion that man hath *over the beaſts of the field, the fowl of the air, and whatſoever paſſes through the paths of the ſea,* ver. 6, 7, 8. and concludes from thence the excellency of God's name in all the earth. All things in the world one way or other center in an uſefulneſs for man, ſome to feed him, ſome to clothe him, ſome to delight him, others to inſtruct him, ſome to exerciſe his wit, and others his ſtrength. Since man did not make them, he did not alſo order them for his own uſe. If they conſpire to ſerve him who never made them, they direct man to acknowledge another, who is the joint creator both of the lord and the ſervants under his dominion. And therefore as the inferior natures are ordered by an inviſible hand for the good of man; ſo the nature of man is by the ſame hand ordered to acknowledge the exiſtence and the glory of the creator of him. This viſible order man knows he did not conſtitute, he did not ſettle thoſe creatures in ſubſerviency to himſelf; they were placed in that order before he had any acquaintance with them, or exiſtence of himſelf, which is a queſtion God puts to Job, to conſider of, Job xxxviii. 4. *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundation of the earth, declare if thou haſt underſtanding?* All is ordered for man's uſe; the heavens anſwer to the earth as a roof to a floor, both compoſing a delightful habitation for man; vapors aſcend from the earth, and the heaven concocts them, and returns them back in welcome ſhowers for the ſupplying of the earth. The light of the ſun deſcends to beautify the earth, and employs its heat to midwife its fruits, and this for the good of the community, whereof man is the head; and though all creatures have diſtinct natures, and muſt act for particular ends, according to the law of their creation; yet there is a joint combination for the good of the whole, as the common end; juſt as all the rivers

rivers in the world, from what part ſoever they come, whether north or ſouth, fall into the ſea for the ſupply of that maſs of waters; which loudly proclaims ſome infinitely wiſe nature, who made thoſe things in ſo exact an harmony.

Thirdly, Add to the production and order of the world, and the creatures acting for their end, the preſervation of them. Nothing can depend upon itſelf in its preſervation, no more than it could in its being. If the order of the world was not fixed by itſelf, the preſervation of that order cannot be continued by itſelf.

Though the matter of the world, after creation, cannot return to that nothing whence it was fetched, without the power of God that made it, (becauſe the ſame power is as requiſite to reduce a thing to nothing as to raiſe a thing from nothing,) yet without the actual exerting of a power that made the creatures, they would fall into confuſion. Thoſe conteſting qualities which are in every part of it, could not have preſerved, but would have conſumed, and extinguiſhed one another, and reduced the world to that confuſed chaos, wherein it was before the Spirit moved upon the waters. As contrary parts could not have met together in one form, unleſs there had been one that had enjoined them, ſo they could not have kept together after their conjunction, unleſs the ſame hand had preſerved them. Natural contrarieties cannot be reconciled. It is as great power to keep diſcords knit, as at firſt to link them. Who would doubt, but that an army made up of ſeveral nations and humours, would fall into a civil war, and ſheathe their ſwords in one another's bowels, if they were not under the management of ſome wiſe general, or a ſhip daſh againſt the rocks without the ſkill of a pilot? As the body hath neither life nor motion, without the active preſence of the ſoul, which diſtributes to every part the virtue of acting; ſets every one in the

exercise of its proper function and resides in every part: so there is some powerful cause which doth the like in the world, that rules and tempers it. There is need of the same power and action, to preserve a thing, as there was at first to make it. When we consider that we are preserved, and know that we could not preserve ourselves; we must necessarily run to some first cause which doth preserve us. All works of art depend upon nature, and are preserved while they are kept by the force of nature: as a statue depends upon the matter whereof it is made, whether stone or brass; this nature therefore must have some superior by whose influx it is preserved. Since therefore we see a stable order in the things of the world, that they conspire together for the good and beauty of the universe; that they depend upon one another: there must be some principle upon which they do depend; something to which the first link of the chain is fastened, which himself depends upon no superior, but wholly rests in his own essence and being: It is the title of God to be the preserver of man and beast. The psalmist elegantly describeth it, Psa. civ. 24. &c. *The earth is full of his riches, all wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season; when he opens his hand he fills them with good: when he hides his face they are troubled: if he take away their breath they die and return to dust: he sends forth his spirit, and they are created, and renews the face of the earth: the glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, and the Lord shall rejoice in his works:* Upon the consideration of all which the Psalmist, ver. 34. takes a pleasure in the meditation of God as the cause and manager of all those things; which issues into a joy in God and a praising of him. And why should not the consideration of the power and wisdom of God in the creatures, produce the same effect in the hearts of us, if he be our God? or as some render it, my meditation shall be sweet, or

acceptable

acceptable to him; whereby I find matter of praiſe in the things of the world and offer it to the Creator of it.

Fourthly, As the production and harmony, ſo particular creatures, purſuing and attaining their ends, manifeſt that there is a God. All particular creatures have natural inſtincts, which move them for ſome end: the intending of an end, is a property of a rational creature; ſince the lower creatures cannot challenge that title, they muſt act by the underſtanding and direction of another: and ſince man cannot challenge the honor of inſpiring the creatures with ſuch inſtincts, it muſt be aſcribed to ſome nature infinitely above any creature in underſtanding. No creature doth determine itſelf. Why do the fruits and grain of the earth nouriſh us, when the earth which inſtrumentally gives them that fitneſs, cannot nouriſh us, but becauſe their ſeveral ends are determined by one higher than the world?

Several creatures have ſeveral natures. How ſoon will all creatures, as ſoon as they ſee the light, move to that whereby they muſt live, and make uſe of the natural arms God hath given their kind, for their defence, before they are grown to any maturity to afford them that defence? The ſcripture makes the appetite of infants to their milk a foundation of the divine glory, Pſa. viii. 3. *Out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings, haſt thou ordained ſtrength*; that is matter of praiſe and acknowledgement of God, in the natural appetite they have to their milk and their reliſh of it. All creatures have a natural affection to their young ones; all young ones, by a natural inſtinct, move to, and receive the nouriſhment that is proper for them. Some are their own phyſicians as well as their own caterers, and naturally diſcern what preſerves them in life, and what reſtores them when ſick.

ſick. The ſwallow flies to its celendine, and the toad haſtens to its plantain.

Can we behold the ſpiders nets, or ſilkworms web, the bees cloſets, or the ants granaries, without acknowledging a higher being than a creature, who hath planted that genius in them? The conſideration of the nature of ſeveral creatures God commended to Job, (chap. xxxix. where he diſcourſeth to Job of the natural inſtincts of the goat, the oſtrich, horſe, eagle, &c.) to perſuade him to the acknowledgment and admiration of God, and humiliation of himſelf.

The ſpider, as if it underſtood the art of weaving, fits its web both for its own habitation, and a net to catch its prey. The bee builds a cell which ſerves for chambers to reſide in, and a repoſitory for its proviſion. Birds are obſerved to build their neſts with a clammy matter without, for the firmer duration of it, and with a ſoft moſs and down within, for the conveniency and warmth of their young: the ſtork knows his appointed time, Jer. viii. 7. and the ſwallows obſerve the time of their coming; they go and return according to the ſeaſons of the year. This they gain, not by conſideration, it deſcends to them with their nature; they neither gain nor increaſe it by rational deductions. It is not in vain to ſpeak of theſe. How little do we improve by meditating on thoſe objects which daily offer themſelves to our view, full of inſtructions for us? And our Saviour ſends his diſciples to ſpell God in the lillies. It is obſerved alſo that the creatures offenſive to man go ſingle: if they went by troops, they would bring deſtruction upon man and beaſt. This is the nature of them for the preſervation of others.

They know not their end. They have a law in their natures, but have no rational underſtanding, either of the end to which they are appointed, or the means fit to attain it; they naturally do what they

they do, and move by no counſel of their own, but by a law impreſt by ſome higher hand upon their natures.

What plant knows why it ſtrikes its root into the earth? Doth it underſtand what ſtorms it is to conteſt with, or why it ſhoots up its branches towards heaven? Doth it know it needs the droppings of the clouds to preſerve itſelf, and make it fruitful? Theſe are acts of underſtanding: the root is downward to preſerve its own ſtanding, the branches upward to preſerve other creatures: this underſtanding is not in the creature itſelf, but originally in another. Thunders and tempeſts know not why they are ſent, yet by the direction of a mighty hand, they are inſtruments of juſtice upon a wicked world.

Rational creatures that act for ſome end, and know the end they aim at, yet know not the manner of the natural motion of the members to it. When we intend to look upon a thing, we take no counſel about the natural motion of our eyes, we know not all the principles of their operations; or how that dull matter whereof our bodies are compoſed, is ſubject to the order of our minds. We are not to counſel with our ſtomachs about the concoction of our meat, or the diſtribution of the nouriſhing juice to the ſeveral parts of the body. Neither the mother nor the fœtus ſit in council how the formation ſhould be made in the womb. We know no more than a plant knows what ſtature it is of, and what medical virtue its fruit hath for the good of man; yet all thoſe natural operations are perfectly directed to their proper end, by an higher wiſdom than any human underſtanding is able to conceive, ſince they exceed the ability of an inanimate or fleſhly nature, yea, and the wiſdom of man. Do we not often ſee reaſonable creatures acting for one end, and perfecting a higher than what they aimed at, or could ſuſpect? When

Joſeph's

Joſeph's brethren ſold him for a ſlave, their end was to be rid of an informer: but the action iſſued in preparing him to be the preſerver of them and their families. Cyrus's end was to be a conqueror, but the action ended in being the Jews deliverer. Prov. xvi. 9. *A man's heart deviſeth his way, but the Lord directs his ſteps.*

Therefore there is ſome ſuperior underſtanding and nature which ſo acts them. That which acts for an end unknown to itſelf, depends upon ſome over-ruling wiſdom that knows that end. Who ſhould direct them in all thoſe ends, but he that beſtowed a being upon them for ſuch ends, who knows what is convenient for their life, ſecurity and propagations of their natures? An exact knowledge is neceſſary both of what is agreeable to them, and the means whereby they muſt attain it, which, ſince it is not inherent in them, is in that wiſe God, who puts thoſe inſtincts into them, and governs them in the exerciſe of them to ſuch ends. Any man that ſees a dart flung, knows it cannot hit the mark without the ſkill and ſtrength of an archer: or he that ſees the hand of a dial pointing to the hours ſucceſſively, knows that the dial is ignorant of its own end, and is diſpoſed and directed in that motion by another. All creatures, ignorant of their own natures, could not univerſally in the whole kind, and in every climate and country, without any difference in the whole world, tend to a certain end, if ſome over-ruling wiſdom did not preſide over the world and guide them: and if the creatures have a conductor, they have a creator: all things are turned round *about by his council, that they may do whatſoever he commands them upon the face of the world in the earth.*

God is a Spirit.

John iv. 24.

GOD IS A SPIRIT, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM, MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

THE words are part of the dialogue between our Saviour, and the Samaritan Woman. Chriſt, intending to return from Judea to Galilee, paſſed through the country of Samaria, a place inhabited not by Jews, but a mixt company of ſeveral nations, and ſome remainders of the poſterity of Iſrael, who eſcaped the captivity and were returned from Aſſyria; and being weary with his journey, arrived about the ſixth hour or noon, (according to the Jews reckoning the time of the day) at a well that Jacob had digged, which was of great account among the inhabitants for the antiquity of it, as well as the uſefulneſs of it, in ſupplying their neceſſities: He being thirſty, and having none to furniſh him wherewith to draw water, at laſt comes a woman from the city, whom he deſires to give him ſome water to drink: the woman, perceiving him by his language or habit to be a Jew, wonders at the queſtion, ſince the hatred the Jews bore the Samaritans was ſo great, that they would not vouchſafe to have any commerce with them, not only in religious, but civil affairs, and common offices belonging to mankind. Hence our Saviour takes occaſion to publiſh to her the doctrine of the goſpel; and excuſeth her rude anſwer

anſwer by her ignorance of him; and tells her, that if ſhe had aſked him a greater matter, even that which concerned her eternal ſalvation, he would readily have granted it, notwithſtanding the rooted hatred between the Jews and Samaritans; and beſtowed a water of a greater virtue, the *water of life.* The woman is no leſs aſtoniſhed at his reply, than ſhe was at his firſt demand. It was ſtrange to hear a man ſpeak of giving living water, to one whom he had begged the water of that ſpring, and had no veſſel to draw any to quench his own thirſt. She therefore demands whence he could have this water that he ſpeaks of, ſince ſhe conceived him not greater than Jacob, who had digged that well and drunk of it. Our Saviour, deſirous to make a progreſs in that work he had begun, extols the water he ſpeaks of above this of the well, from its particular virtue, fully to refreſh thoſe that drank of it, and be as a cooling and comforting fountain within them, of more efficacy than that without. The woman conceiving a good opinion of our Saviour, deſires to partake of this water, to ſave her pains in coming daily to the well, not apprehending the ſpirituality of Chriſt's diſcourſe to her: Chriſt finding her to take ſome pleaſure in his diſcourſe, partly to bring her to a ſenſe of her ſin, before he did communicate the excellency of his grace, bids her return back to the city and bring her huſband with her to him; ſhe freely acknowledges that ſhe had no huſband, whether having ſome check of conſcience at preſent for the unclean life ſhe led, or loth to loſe ſo much time in the gaining this water ſo much deſired by her: our Saviour takes an occaſion from this to lay open her ſin before her, and to make her ſenſible of her own wicked life and the prophetic excellency of himſelf; and tells her, ſhe had had five huſbands to whom ſhe had been falſe, and by whom ſhe was divorced, and the perſon

ſhe

ſhe now dwelt with was not her lawful huſband, and in living with him ſhe violated the rights of marriage, and increaſed guilt upon her conſcience. The woman being affected with this diſcourſe, and knowing him to be a ſtranger, that could not be certified of thoſe things but in an extraordinary way, begins to have a high eſteem of him as a prophet; and upon this opinion ſhe eſteems him able to decide a queſtion which had been canvaſt between them and the Jews about the place of worſhip. Their fathers worſhipping in that mountain, and the Jews affirming Jeruſalem to be a place of worſhip, ſhe pleads the antiquity of the worſhip in this place: Abraham having built an altar there, Gen. xii. 7. and Jacob upon his return from Syria. And ſurely had the place been capable of an exception, ſuch perſons as they, and ſo well acquainted with the will of God, would not have pitched upon that place to celebrate their worſhip.

Antiquity hath too often bewitched the minds of men, and drawn them from the revealed will of God. Men are more willing to imitate the outward actions of their famous anceſtors, than conform themſelves to the revealed will of their Creator. The Samaritans would imitate the patriarchs in the place of worſhip, but not in the faith of the worſhippers.

In the words there is, 1. A propoſition, *God is a ſpirit.* The foundation of all religion.

2. An inference, *they that worſhip him*, &c. As God, a worſhip belongs to him; as a ſpirit, a ſpiritual worſhip is due to him. In the inference we have,

1. The manner of worſhip, *in ſpirit and truth.*
2. The neceſſity of ſuch a worſhip, *muſt.*

The propoſition declares the nature of God; the inference, the duty of man.

The obſervations lie plain, 1. God is a pure ſpiritual being—*he is a ſpirit.* 2. The worſhip due from

from the creature to God, muſt be agreeable to the nature of God, and purely ſpiritual. 3. The evangelical ſtate is ſuited to the nature of God.

For the firſt, God is a pure ſpiritual being.

It is the obſervation of one, that the plain aſſertion of God being a ſpirit, is found but once in the whole bible, and that is in this place; which may well be wondered at; becauſe God is ſo often deſcribed with hands, feet, eyes and ears in the form and figure of a man. The ſpiritual nature of God, is deducible from many places; but not any where, as I remember aſſerted, but in this text: Some alledge that place, 2 Cor. iii. 17. *the Lord is that ſpirit*, for the proof of it; but that ſeems to have a different ſenſe: in the text the nature of God is deſcribed; in that place, the operations of God in the goſpel. It is not the miniſtry of Moſes, or that old covenant, which communicates to you that ſpirit it ſpeaks of; but it is the Lord Jeſus, and the doctrine of the goſpel delivered by him, whereby this ſpirit and liberty is diſpenſed to you: he oppoſes here the liberty of the goſpel to the ſervitude of the law. It is from Chriſt, that a divine virtue diffuſeth itſelf by the goſpel; it is by him, not by the law, that we partake of that ſpirit.

The ſpirituality of God, is as evident as his being. If we grant that God is, we muſt neceſſarily grant that he cannot be corporeal; becauſe a body is of an imperfect nature. It will appear incredible to any that acknowledge God the firſt being and creator of all things, that he ſhould be a maſſy heavy body, and have eyes and ears, feet and hands as we have.

For the explication of it —Spirit is taken various ways in ſcripture: it ſignifies ſometimes an aerial ſubſtance, as Pſalm xi. 6. *a horrible tempeſt*—Heb. a *ſpirit* of tempeſt. Sometimes the breath, which is a thin ſubſtance, Gen. vi. 17, *all fleſh wherein is the breath of life*—Heb. *ſpirit* of life. A thin ſubſtance, though

though it be material and corporeal, is called *ſpirit*. And in the bodies of living creatures, that which is the principle of their actions is called ſpirits; the animal and vital ſpirits: and the finer parts extracted from plants and minerals, we call ſpirits: thoſe volatile parts ſeparated from that groſs matter wherein they were immerſt, becauſe they come neareſt to the nature of an incorporeal ſubſtance: and from this notion of the word, it is tranſlated to ſignify thoſe ſubſtances that are purely immaterial, as angels and the ſouls of men. Angels are called ſpirits, Pſal. civ. 4. *Who makes his angels ſpirits*; and not only good angels are ſo called, but evil angels, Mark i. 27. Souls of men are called ſpirits, Eccl. xii. 7. and the ſoul of Chriſt is called ſo, John xix. 30. God is called *the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh*, Numb. xxii. 16, and ſpirit is oppoſed to fleſh, Iſa. xxxi. 3. *The Egyptians are fleſh and not ſpirit*. And our Saviour gives us the notion of a ſpirit to be ſomething above the nature of a body, Luke xxiv. 39. *not having fleſh and bones*, extended parts, loads of groſs matter. It is alſo taken for thoſe things which are active and efficacious; becauſe activity, is of the nature of a ſpirit. Caleb had another ſpirit, Num. xiv. 24. an active affection. The vehement motions of ſin are called ſpirit, Hoſ. iv. 12. *the ſpirit of whoredoms*, in that ſenſe; Prov. xxix. 11. *A fool utters all his mind*, all his ſpirit, he knows not how to reſtrain the vehement motions of his mind. So that the notion of a ſpirit is, that it is a fine immaterial ſubſtance, an active being, that acts itſelf and other things. A meer body cannot act itſelf; as the body of man cannot move without the ſoul, no more than a ſhip can move itſelf without wind and waves.

So God is called a ſpirit, as being not a body, not having the greatneſs, figure, thickneſs or length of a body, wholly ſeparate from any thing of fleſh and matter. We find a principle within us nobler

than that of our bodies; and therefore we conceive the nature of God, according to that which is more worthy in us, and not according to that which is the vileſt part of our natures. God is a moſt ſpiritual ſpirit, more ſpiritual than all angels, all ſouls: as he exceeds all in the nature of being, ſo he exceeds all in the nature of ſpirit: he hath nothing groſs, heavy, material, in his eſſence.

When we ſay God is a ſpirit, it is to be underſtood by way of negation. There are two ways of knowing or deſcribing God: by affirmation, affirming that of him in a way of eminency, which is excellent in the creature; as when we ſay, God is wiſe, good: the other, by way of negation, when we remove from God in our conceptions, what is tainted with imperfection in the creature. The firſt aſcribes to him whatſoever is excellent; the other ſeparates from him whatſoever is imperfect. The firſt is like a limning, which adds one colour to another to make a comely picture; the other is like a carving, which pares and cuts away whatſoever is ſuperfluous, to make a compleat ſtatue. This way of negation is more eaſy; we better underſtand what God is not, than what he is; and moſt of our knowledge of God, is by this way: as when we ſay God is infinite, immenſe, immutable, they are negatives: he hath no limits, is confined to no place, admits of no change. When we remove from him what is inconſiſtent with his being, we do more ſtrongly aſſert his being, and know more of him when we elevate him above all, and above our own capacity. And when we ſay God is a ſpirit, it is a negation; he is not a body; he conſiſts not of various parts, extended one without and beyond another: He is not a ſpirit ſo as our ſouls are, to be the form of any body: a ſpirit not as angels and ſouls are, but infinitely higher; we call him ſo, becauſe in regard of our weakneſs, we have not any other term of excellency to expreſs or conceive

conceive of him by: we transfer it to God in honour, becauſe ſpirit is the higheſt excellency in our nature: yet we muſt apprehend God above any ſpirit, ſince his nature is ſo great, that he cannot be declared by human ſpeech, perceived by human ſenſe, or conceived by human underſtanding.

Some among the heathens imagined God to have a body; ſome thought him to have a body of air, ſome a heavenly body, ſome a human body: and many of them aſcribed bodies to their gods; but bodies without blood, without corruption; bodies made up of the fineſt and thinneſt atoms; ſuch bodies, which if compared with ours, were as no bodies. The Sadducees alſo, who denied all ſpirits, and yet acknowledged a God, muſt conclude him to be a body and no ſpirit. Some among chriſtians have been of that opinion. Tertullian is charged by ſome, and excuſed by others: and ſome monks of Egypt were ſo fierce for this error, that they attempted to kill one Theophilus, a biſhop, for not being of that judgment.

But the wiſer heathens were of another mind, and eſteemed it an unholy thing to have ſuch imaginations of God. And ſome chriſtians have thought God only to be free from any thing of body, becauſe he is omnipreſent, immutable, he is only incorporeal and ſpiritual; all things elſe, even the angels are clothed with bodies, though of a neater matter and more active frame than ours; a pure ſpiritual nature they allowed to no being but God. Scripture and reaſon meet together to aſſert the ſpirituality of God. Had God had the lineaments of a body, the Gentiles had not fallen under the accuſation of changing his glory into that of a corruptible man.

This is ſignified by the name God gives himſelf, Exod. iii. 14. *I am that I am*; a ſimple, pure, uncompounded being, without any created mixture; as infinitely above the being of creatures, as

above the conceptions of creatures, Job. xxxvii. 23. *Touching the almighty, we cannot find him out.* He is ſo much a ſpirit, that he is the father of ſpirits, Heb. xii. 9. The Almighty Father is not of a nature inferior to his children: the ſoul is a ſpirit, it could not elſe exert actions without the aſſiſtance of the body, as the act of underſtanding itſelf, and its own nature, the act of willing, and willing things againſt the incitements and intereſt of the body: it could not elſe conceive of God, angels and immaterial ſubſtances: it could not elſe be ſo active, as with one glance to fetch a compaſs from earth to heaven, and by a ſudden motion, to elevate the underſtanding from an earthly thought, to the thinking of things as high as the higheſt heavens. If we have this opinion of our ſouls, which in the nobleneſs of their acts ſurmount the body, without which the body is but a dull inactive piece of clay, we muſt needs have a higher conception of God, than to clog him with any matter, though of a finer temper than ours: We muſt conceive of him by the perfections of our ſouls, without the vileneſs of our bodies. If God made man according to his image, we muſt raiſe our thoughts of God according to the nobleſt part of that image, and imagine the exemplar or copy, not to come ſhort, but to exceed the thing copied by it. God were not the moſt excellent ſubſtance, if he were not a ſpirit: ſpiritual ſubſtances are more excellent than bodily; the ſoul of man more excellent than other animals; angels more excellent than men: they contain in their own nature, whatſoever dignity there is in the inferior creatures. God muſt have therefore an excellency above all thoſe, and is entirely remote from the conditions of a body.

It is a groſs conceit therefore to think that God is ſuch a ſpirit as the air is; for that is to be a body as the air is, though it be a thin one; and if God were no more a ſpirit than that, or than angels, he would

would not be the moſt ſimple being: yet ſome think that the ſpiritual deity was repreſented by the air in the ark of the teſtament. It was unlawful to repreſent him by any image that God had prohibited: every thing about the ark had a particular ſignification: the gold, and other ornaments about it, ſignified ſomething of Chriſt, but were unfit to repreſent the nature of God: a thing purely inviſible and falling under nothing of ſenſe, could not repreſent him to the mind of man: the air in the ark was the fitteſt, it repreſented the inviſibility of God, air being imperceptible to our eyes. Air diffuſeth itſelf through all parts of the world; it glides through ſecret paſſages into all creatures; it fills the ſpace between heaven and earth; there is no place wherein God is not preſent.

To evidence this,

If God were not a ſpirit, he could not be creator. All multitude begins in, and is reduced to unity. As above multitude there is an abſolute unity; ſo above mixt creatures, there is an abſolute ſimplicity: you cannot conceive number without conceiving the beginning of it in that which was not number, viz. a unit: you cannot conceive any mixture, but you muſt conceive ſome ſimple thing to be the original and baſis of it. The works of art done by rational creatures, have their foundation in ſomething ſpiritual. Every artificer, watch-maker, carpenter, hath a model in his own mind of the work he deſigns to frame: the material and outward fabrick is ſquared according to an inward and ſpiritual idea. A ſpiritual idea ſpeaks a ſpiritual faculty as the ſubject of it. God could not have an idea of the vaſt number of creatures he brought into being, if he had not had a ſpiritual nature. The wiſdom whereby the world was created could never be the fruit of a corporeal nature; ſuch natures are not capable of underſtanding and comprehending the things which are

within the compaſs of their nature, much leſs of producing them: and therefore beaſts, which have only corporeal faculties, move to objects by the force of their ſenſe, and have no knowledge of things as they are comprehended by the underſtanding of man. All acts of wiſdom ſpeak an intelligent and ſpiritual agent: the effects of wiſdom, goodneſs, power, are ſo great and admirable, that they beſpeak him a more perfect and eminent being, than can poſſibly be beheld under a bodily ſhape. Can a corporeal ſubſtance put wiſdom in the inward parts, and give underſtanding to the heart?

If God were not a pure ſpirit, he could not be one. If God had a body, conſiſting of diſtinct members, as ours; or all of one nature, as the water and air are, yet he were then capable of diviſion, and therefore could not be entirely one. Either thoſe parts would be finite or infinite; if finite, they are not parts of God; for to be God and finite is a contradiction: if infinite, there are as many infinites, as diſtinct members, and therefore as many deities: ſuppoſe this body had all parts of the ſame nature as air and water hath, every little part of air is as much air as the greateſt, and every little part of water is as much water as the ocean; ſo every little part of God would be as much God as the whole; as many particular deities to make up God, as little atoms to compoſe a body: what can be more abſurd? If God had a body like a human body, and were compounded of body and ſoul, of ſubſtance and quality, he could not be the moſt perfect unity; he would be made up of diſtinct parts, and thoſe of a diſtinct nature, as the members of a human body are: where there is the greateſt unity, there muſt be the greateſt ſimplicity; but God is one: as he is free from any change, ſo he is void of any multitude, Deut. vi, 4. *The Lord God is one Lord.*

If God had a body as we have, he would not be

be invisible. Every material thing is not visible: the air is a body yet invisible, but it is sensible; the cooling quality of it is felt by us at every breath, and we know it by our touch, which is the most material sense. Every body, that hath members like to bodies, is visible: but God is invisible. The apostle reckons it amongst his other perfections, 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible:* he is invisible to our sense, which beholds nothing but material and coloured things; and incomprehensible to our understanding, that conceives not but what is finite. God is therefore a spirit incapable of being seen, and infinitely uncapable of being understood: if he be invisible, he is also spiritual: if he had a body, and hid it from our eyes, he might be said not to be seen, but could not be said to be invisible. When we say a thing is visible, we understand that it hath such qualities which are the objects of sense, though we may never see that which is in its own nature to be seen. God hath no such qualities as fall under the perception of our sense: his works are visible to us, but not his godhead. The nature of a human body is to be seen and handled; Christ gives us such a description of it, Luke xxiv. 39. *Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have:* But man hath been so far from seeing God, *that it is impossible he can see him,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. There is such a disproportion between an infinite object and a finite sense and understanding, that it is utterly impossible either to behold or comprehend him. But if God had a body more luminous and glorious than that of the sun, he would be as well visible to us as the sun, though the immensity of that light would dazzle our eyes, and forbid any close inspection into him by the virtue of our sense: we have seen the shape and figure of the sun, but no man hath ever seen the shape of God. If God had a body he were visible,

though he might not perfectly and fully be ſeen by us—as we ſee the heavens, though we ſee not the extenſion, latitude, and greatneſs of them. Though God hath manifeſted himſelf in a bodily ſhape, Gen. xviii. 1. *And elſewhere*; Jehovah appeared to Abraham: yet the ſubſtance of God was not ſeen, no more than the ſubſtance of angels was ſeen in their apparitions to men. A body was formed to be made viſible by them, and ſuch actions done in that body, that ſpake the perſon that did them, to be of a higher eminency than a bare corporeal creature: ſometimes a repreſentation is made to the inward ſenſe and imagination, as to Michaiah, and to Iſaiah, vi. 1. But they ſaw not the eſſence of God, but ſome images and figures of him proportioned to their ſenſe or imagination. The eſſence of God no man ever ſaw, nor can ſee, John i. 18.

Nor doth it follow, that God hath a body, becauſe Jacob is ſaid to ſee God face to face, Gen. xxxii. 30. And Moſes had the like privilege, Deut. xxxiv. 10. This only ſignifies a fuller and clearer manifeſtation of God, by ſome repreſentations offered to the bodily ſenſe, or rather to the inward ſpirit. For God tells Moſes he could not ſee his face, Exod. xxxiii. 20. And that none ever ſaw the ſimilitude of God, Deut. iv. 15. Were God a corporeal ſubſtance he might in ſome meaſure be ſeen by corporeal eyes.

If God were not a ſpirit, he could not be infinite. All bodies are of a finite nature: every body is material, and every material thing is terminated. The ſun, a vaſt body, hath a bounded greatneſs: the heavens, of a mighty bulk, yet have their limits. If God had a body, he muſt conſiſt of parts; thoſe parts would be bounded and limited, and whatſoever is limited is of a finite virtue, and therefore below an infinite nature. Reaſon therefore tells us, that the moſt excellent nature, as God is, cannot be of a corporeal condition; becauſe of the limitation

limitation and other actions which belong to every body. God is infinite, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, 2 Chron. ii. 6. The largeſt heavens, and thoſe imaginary ſpaces beyond the world, are no bounds to him. He hath an eſſence beyond the bounds of the world, and cannot be included in the vaſtneſs of the heavens. If God be infinite, then he can have no parts in him; if he had, they muſt be finite, or infinite: finite parts can never make up an infinite being. A veſſel of gold, of a pound weight, cannot be made of the quantity of an ounce. Infinite parts they cannot be, becauſe then every part would be equal to the whole, as infinite as the whole, which is contradictory. We ſee in all things every part is leſs than the whole bulk that is compoſed of it; as every member of a man is leſs than the whole body of a man: if all the parts were finite, then God in his eſſence were finite; and a finite God is not more excellent than a creature: ſo that if God were not a ſpirit, he could not be infinite.

If God were not a ſpirit, he could not be an independent being. Whatſoever is compounded of many parts, depends either eſſentially or integrally upon thoſe parts; as the eſſence of a man depends upon the conjunction and union of his two main parts, his ſoul and body; when they are ſeparated, the eſſence of a man ceaſeth; and the perfection of of a man depends upon every member of the body; ſo that if one be wanting the perfection of the whole is wanting: as if a man hath loſt a limb, you call him not a perfect man; becauſe that part is gone upon which his perfection as an intire man did depend: If God therefore had a body, the perfection of the deity would depend upon every part of that body; and the more parts he were compounded of, the more his dependency would be multiplied, according to the number of thoſe parts of the body: for that which is compounded of many parts is more

more dependent than that which is compounded of fewer.

And becauſe God would be a dependent being if he had a body, he could not be the firſt being; for the compounding parts are in order of nature before that which is compounded by them; as the ſoul and body are before the man which reſults from the union of them. If God had parts and bodily members as we have, or any compoſition, the eſſence of God would reſult from thoſe parts, and thoſe parts be ſuppoſed to be before God. For that which is a part, is before that whoſe part it is. As in artificial things you may conceive it: all the parts of a watch or clock, are in time before that watch whch is made by ſetting thoſe parts together. In natural things, you muſt ſuppoſe the members of a body framed, before you can call it a man; ſo that the parts of this body are before that which is conſtituted by them. We can conceive no other of God, if he were not a pure, intire, unmixed ſpirit: if he had diſtinct parts, he would depend upon them; thoſe parts would be before him; his eſſence would be the effect of thoſe diſtinct parts, and ſo he would not be abſolutely and intirely the firſt being: but he is ſo, Iſa. xliv. 6. *I am the firſt, and I am the laſt.* He is the firſt; nothing is before him: Whereas if he had bodily parts, and thoſe finite, it would follow, God is made up of thoſe parts which are not God; and that which is not God, is in order of nature, before that which is God. So that we ſee if God were not a ſpirit, he could not be independent.

If God were not a ſpirit, he were not immutable and unchangeable. His immutability depends upon his ſimplicity. He is unchangeable in his eſſence, becauſe he is a pure and unmixed ſpiritual being. Whatſoever is compounded of parts, may be divided into thoſe parts, and reſolved into thoſe diſtinct parts which make up and conſtitute the nature.

nature. Whatſoever is compounded, is changeable in its own nature, though it ſhould never be changed. Adam, who was conſtituted of body and ſoul, had he ſtood in innocence, had not died; there had been no ſeparation made between his ſoul and body whereof he was conſtituted, and his body had not reſolved into thoſe principles of duſt from whence it was extracted: yet in his own nature he was diſſoluble into thoſe diſtinct parts whereof he was compounded. And ſo the glorified ſaints in heaven, after the reſurrection, and the happy meeting of their ſouls and bodies in a new marriage knot, ſhall never be diſſolved; yet in their own nature they are mutable and diſſoluble, and cannot be otherwiſe, becauſe they are made up of ſuch diſtinct parts that may be ſeparated in their own nature, unleſs ſuſtained by the grace of God. They are immutable by will, the will of God, not by nature. God is immutable by nature as well as by will: as he hath a neceſſary exiſtence, ſo he hath a neceſſary unchangeableneſs, Mal. iii. 6. *I the Lord change not.* He is unchangeable in his eſſence, as in his veracity and faithfulneſs: they are perfections belonging to his nature; but if he were not a pure ſpirit, he could not be immutable by nature.

If God were not a pure ſpirit, he could not be omnipreſent. *He is in heaven above, and the earth below: He fills heaven and earth.* The divine eſſence is at once in heaven and earth; but it is impoſſible a body can be in two places at one and the ſame time. Since God is every where, he muſt be ſpiritual: had he a body, he could not penetrate all things; he would be circumſcribed in place. He could not be every where but in parts, not in the whole; one member in one place, and another in another; for to be confined to a particular place, is the property of a body: but ſince he is diffuſed through the whole world; higher than

than heaven, deeper than hell; longer than the earth, broader than the ſea; he hath not any corporeal matter. If he had a body wherewith to fill heaven and earth, there could be no body beſides his own: it is the nature of bodies to bind one another, and hinder the extending of one another. Two bodies cannot be in the ſame place, in the ſame point of earth, one excludes the other: and it will follow hence, that we are nothing, no ſubſtances, mere illuſions; there could be no place for any body elſe. If his body was as big as the world, as it muſt be, if with that he filled heaven and earth, there would be no room for him to move hand or foot, or extend a finger; there would be no place remaining for the motion.

If God was not a ſpirit, he could not be the moſt perfect being. The more perfect any thing is in the rank of creatures, the more ſpiritual and ſimple it is, as gold is the more pure and perfect that hath leaſt mixture of other metals. If God was not a ſpirit, there would be creatures of a more excellent nature than God; as angels and ſouls, which the ſcripture calls ſpirits, in oppoſition to bodies. There is more of perfection in the firſt notion of a ſpirit, than in the notion of a body. God cannot be leſs perfect than his creatures, and contribute an excellency of being to them which he wants himſelf. If angels and ſouls poſſeſs ſuch an excellency, and God want that excellency, he would be leſs than his creatures, and the excellency of the effect, would exceed the excellency of the cauſe. But every creature, even the higheſt creature, is infinitely ſhort of the perfection of God; for whatſoever excellency they have, is finite and limited; it is but a ſpark from the ſun, a drop from the ocean; but God is unboundedly perfect in the higheſt manner, without any limitation; and therefore above ſpirits, angels, the higheſt creatures that were made by him: an infinite ſublimity,

ſublimity, a pure act, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken. *In him there is light and no darkneſs*; ſpirituality without any matter; perfection without any ſhadow or taint of imperfection. Light pierceth into all things, preſerves its own purity, and admits of no mixture of any thing elſe with it.

Secondly, The worſhip due from the creature to God, muſt be agreeable to the nature of God, and purely ſpiritual. I ſhall therefore,

1. Lay down ſome general propoſitions.
2. Shew what this ſpiritual worſhip is.
3. Why we muſt offer to God a ſpiritual ſervice.
4. The uſe.

Firſt, Some general propoſitions. The right exerciſe of worſhip is founded upon and riſeth from the ſpirituality of God. The firſt ground of the worſhip we render to God, is the infinite excellency of his nature, which is not only one attribute, but reſults from all: for God, as God, is the object of worſhip; and the notion of God conſiſts not in thinking him wiſe, good, juſt, but all thoſe infinitely beyond any conception. And hence it follows that God is an object infinitely to be beloved and honoured. Pſa. cxxx. *There is forgiveneſs with thee that thou mayeſt be feared.* Fear in the the ſcripture dialect, ſignifies the whole worſhip of God. Acts x. 35. *But in every nation he that fears him is accepted of him.* If God ſhould act towards men according to the rigors of his juſtice due to them for the leaſt of their crimes, there could be no exerciſe of any affection but that of deſpair, which could not engender a worſhip of God, which ought to be joined with love, not with hatred. The beneficence and patience of God, and his readineſs to pardon men, is the reaſon of the honour they return to him: and this is ſo evident a motive, that generally the idolatrous world ranked thoſe creatures in the number of their Gods, which they perceived

uſeful

uſeful and beneficial to mankind; as the ſun and moon, the Egyptians, the ox, &c. and the more beneficial any thing appeared to mankind, the higher ſtation men gave it in the rank of their deities, and beſtowed a more peculiar and ſolemn worſhip upon it. Men worſhipped God to procure or continue his favour, which would not have been acted by them, had they not conceived it a pleaſing thing to him to be merciful and gracious.

Sometimes his juſtice is propoſed to us as a motive of worſhip. Heb. xii. 28, 29. *Serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a conſuming fire*; which includes his holineſs, whereby he doth hate ſin, as well as his wrath, whereby he doth puniſh it. Who but a mad and totally brutiſh perſon, or one that was reſolved to make war againſt heaven, could behold the effects of God's anger in the world, conſider him in his juſtice as a conſuming fire, and deſpiſe him, and rather be drawn out by that conſideration to blaſphemy and deſpair, than to ſeek all ways to appeaſe him? Now though the infinite power of God, his unſpeakable wiſdom, his incomprehenſible goodneſs, the holineſs of his nature, the vigilance of his providence, the bounty of his hand, ſignify to man, that he ſhould love and honour him, and are the motives of worſhip; yet the ſpirituality of his nature is the rule of worſhip, and directs us to render our duty to him with all the powers of our ſoul. As his goodneſs beams out upon us, worſhip is due in juſtice to him; and as he is the moſt excellent nature, veneration is due to him in the higheſt manner with the choiceſt affections.

So that indeed the ſpirituality of God comes chiefly into conſideration in matter of worſhip: all his perfections are grounded upon this: he could not be infinite, immutable, omniſcient, if he was a corporeal being: we cannot give him a worſhip unleſs we judge him worthy, excellent and deſerving a

worſhip at our hands: and we cannot judge him worthy of a worſhip, unleſs we have ſome apprehenſions and admirations of his infinite virtues: and we cannot apprehend and admire thoſe perfections, but as we ſee them as cauſes ſhining in their effects. When we ſee therefore the frame of the world to be the work of his power; the order of the world to be the fruit of his wiſdom, and the uſefulneſs of the world to be the product of his goodneſs, we find the motives and reaſons of worſhip; and weighing that this power, wiſdom, goodneſs, infinitely tranſcend any corporeal nature, we find a rule of worſhip, that it ought to be offered by us in a manner ſuitable to ſuch a nature, as is infinitely above any bodily being. His being a ſpirit, declares what he is; his other perfections declare what kind of ſpirit he is. All God's perfections ſuppoſe him a ſpirit; all center in this: his wiſdom doth not ſuppoſe him merciful, or his mercy ſuppoſe him omniſcient: there may be diſtinct notions of thoſe, but all ſuppoſe him, of a ſpiritual nature. How cold and frozen will our devotions be, if we conſider not his omniſcience, whereby he diſcerns our hearts? How carnal will our ſervices be, if we conſider him not as a pure ſpirit? In our offers to, and tranſactions with men, we deal not with them as mere animals, but as rational creatures; and we debaſe their natures if we treat them otherwiſe; and if we have not raiſed apprehenſions of God's ſpiritual nature in our treating with him, but allow him only ſuch frames as we think fit enough for men; we debaſe his ſpirituality to the littleneſs of our own being: we muſt therefore poſſeſs our ſouls with this, we ſhall elſe render him no better than a fleſhly ſervice. We do not much concern ourſelves in thoſe things, of which we are either utterly ignorant, or have but ſlight apprehenſions of.

That is the firſt propoſition; the right exerciſe of

of worſhip is grounded upon the ſpirituality of God.

2. This ſpiritual worſhip of God is manifeſt by the light of nature, to be due to him. In reference to this, conſider.

The outward means or matter of that worſhip which would be acceptable to God, was not known by the light of nature. The law for a worſhip, and for a ſpiritual worſhip, by the faculties of our ſouls was natural, and part of the law of creation; though the determination of the particular acts, whereby God would have this homage teſtified, was of poſitive inſtitution, and depended not upon the law of creation. Though Adam in innocence knew God was to be worſhipped; yet by nature he did not know by what outward acts he was to pay this reſpect, or at what time he was more ſolemnly to be exerciſed in it than at another: this depended upon the directions God, as the ſovereign governor and law-giver, ſhould preſcribe. You therefore find the poſitive inſtitutions of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the determination of the time of worſhip, Gen. ii. 3—17. Had there been any ſuch notion in Adam naturally, as ſtrong as that other, that a worſhip was due to God, there would have been found ſome relics of theſe modes univerſally conſented to by mankind, as well as of the other: but though all nations have by an univerſal conſent concurred in the acknowledgment of the being of God, and his right to adoration, and the obligation of the creature to it; and that there ought to be ſome public rule and polity in matters of religion; (for no nation hath been in the world without a worſhip, and without external acts and ceremonies to ſignify that worſhip) yet their modes and rites have been as various as their climates, unleſs in that common notion of ſacrifices, not deſcending to them by nature, but tradition from Adam; and the various ways of worſhip have been more provoking than pleaſing: every

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nation ſuited the kind of worſhip to their particular ends and polities they deſigned to rule by. How God was to be worſhipped, is more difficult to be diſcerned by nature with its eyes out, than with its eyes clear. The pillars upon which the worſhip of God ſtands, cannot be diſcerned without revelation, no more than blind Samſon could tell where the pillars of the Philiſtines theatre ſtood, without one to conduct him. What Adam could not ſee with his ſound eyes, we cannot with our dim eyes; he muſt be told from heaven, what worſhip was fit for the God of heaven: it is not by nature that we can have ſuch a full proſpect of God as may content and quiet us; this is the noble effect of divine revelation; he only knows himſelf, and can only make himſelf known to us. It could not be ſuppoſed, that an infinite God ſhould have no perfections but what were viſible in the works of his hands; and that theſe perfections ſhould not be infinitely greater, than as they were ſenſible in their preſent effects: this had been to apprehend God a limitted being, meaner than he is. Now it is impoſſible to honour God as we ought, unleſs we know him as he is; and we could not know him as he is, without divine revelation from himſelf; for none but God can acquaint us with his own nature: and therefore the nations void of this conduct, heaped up modes of worſhip from their own imaginations, unworthy of the majeſty of God, and below the nature of man: a rational man would ſcarce have owned ſuch for ſigns of honor, as the ſcripture mentions in the ſervices of Baal and Dagon, much leſs an infinitely wiſe and glorious God: and when God had ſignified his mind to his own people, how unwilling were they to reſt ſatisfied with God's determination, but would be warping to their own inventions, and make gods, and ways of worſhip to themſelves? as in the matter of the golden calf, as was lately ſpoken of.

Though the outward manner of worſhip acceptable to God, could not be known without revelation, and thoſe revelations might be various; yet the inward manner of worſhip with our ſpirits was manifeſt by nature: and not only manifeſt by nature to Adam in innocence, but after his fall, and the ſcales he had brought upon his underſtanding by that fall. When God gave him his positive inſtitutions before the fall, or whatſoever additions God ſhould have made, had he perſiſted in that ſtate; or when he appointed him after his fall to teſtify his acknowledgment of him by ſacrifices, there needed no command to him to make thoſe acknowledgments by thoſe outward ways preſcribed to him, with the intention and prime affection of his ſpirit: this nature would inſtruct him in without revelation: for he could not poſſibly have any ſemblance of reaſon to think, that the offering of beaſts, or preſenting the firſt fruits of the increaſe of the ground, as an acknowledgment of God's ſovereignity over him and his bounty to him, was ſufficient, without devoting to him that part wherein the image of his creator did conſiſt: he could not but diſcern by a reflection upon his own being, that he was made for God as well as by God: Rom. xi. 36. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*, &c. That the whole whereof he did conſiſt was due to God; and that his body, the dreggy and duſty part of his nature, was not fit to be brought alone before God, without that nobler principle, which he had by creation linked with it. Nothing in the whole law of nature, as it is informed of religion, was clearer, next to the being of God, than this manner of worſhipping God with the mind and ſpirit. And as the Gentiles never ſunk ſo low into the mud of idolatry, as to think the images they worſhipped were really their gods, but the repreſentations, or habitations of their gods; ſo they never deſerted this principle in the notion

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of it, that God was to be honoured with the beſt they were, and the beſt they had: as they never denied the being of a God in the notion, though they did in the practice, ſo they never rejected this principle in notion, though they did in the inward obſervation of it: it was a maxim among them that God was *mens, animus;* mind and ſpirit, and therefore was to be honoured with the mind and ſpirit: that religion did not conſiſt in the ceremonies of the body, but the work of the ſoul; whence, the ſpeech of one of them; "Sacrifice to the gods not ſo much clothed with purple garments as a pure heart:" and of another, "God regards not the multitude of the ſacrifices, but the diſpoſition of the ſacrificer." It is not fit we ſhould deny God the cream and flower, and give him the flotten part and the ſtalks. And with what reverence and intention of mind they thought their worſhip was to be performed, is evident by the prieſts crying out often, *hoc age,* mind this, let your ſpirits be intent upon it.

This muſt reſult from the knowledge of ourſelves. It is a natural principle, *God hath made us, and not we ourſelves,* Pſ. c. 1, 2. Man knows himſelf to be a rational creature: as a creature he was to ſerve his creator, and as a rational creature, with the beſt part of that rational nature he derived from him. By the ſame act of reaſon that he knows himſelf to be a creature, he knows himſelf to have a creator: that this creator is more excellent than himſelf, and that an honour is due from him to the creator for framing of him; and therefore this honour was to be offered to him by the moſt excellent part which was framed by him. Man cannot conſider himſelf as a thinking, underſtanding being; but he muſt know that he muſt give God the honour of his thoughts, and worſhip him with thoſe faculties whereby he thinks, wills, and acts. He muſt know his faculties were given him to act,

and to act for the glory of that God who gave him a ſoul and the faculties of it; and he could not in reaſon think they muſt be only active in his own ſervice, and the ſervice of the creature, and idle and unprofitable in the ſervice of his creator. With the ſame powers of our ſoul whereby we contemplate God, we muſt alſo worſhip God: we cannot think of him but with our minds, nor love him but with our will; and we cannot worſhip him without the acts of thinking and loving, and therefore cannot worſhip him without the exerciſe of our inward faculties: how is it poſſible then for any man that knows his own nature, to think that extended hands, bended knees, and lifted up eyes, were ſufficient acts of worſhip, without a quickened and active ſpirit?

From the knowledge of God. As there was a knowledge of God by nature, ſo the ſame nature did dictate to man that God was to be glorified as God: the apoſtle implies the inference in the charge he brings againſt them for neglecting it. "We ſhould ſpeak of God as he is," ſaid one; and the ſame reaſon would inform them that they were to act towards God as he is. The excellency of the object required a worſhip according to the dignity of his nature; which could not be anſwered but by the moſt ſerious inward affection, as well as outward decency; and a want of this, cannot but be judged to be unbecoming the majeſty of the creator of the world, and the excellency of religion. No nation, no perſon did ever aſſert, that the vileſt part of man was enough for the moſt excellent being, as God is: that a bodily ſervice could be a ſufficient acknowledgement of the greatneſs of God, or a ſufficient return for the bounty of God. Man could not but know that he was to act in religion, conformably to the object of religion, and to the excellency of his own ſoul: the notion of a God was ſufficient to fill the mind of a man with admiration and reverence,

rence, and the firſt concluſion from it would be to honour God, and that he have all the affection placed on him, that ſo infinite and ſpiritual a being did deſerve: the progreſs then would be, that this excellent being was to be honoured with the motions of the underſtanding and will; with the pureſt and moſt ſpiritual powers in the nature of man; becauſe he was a ſpiritual being, and had nothing of matter mingled with him. Such a brutiſh imagination, to ſuppoſe that blood and fumes, beaſts and incenſe, could pleaſe a deity, without a ſpiritual frame, cannot be ſuppoſed to befal any but thoſe that had loſt their reaſon in the rubbiſh of ſenſe. Mere rational nature could never conclude, that ſo excellent a ſpirit would be put off with a mere animal ſervice; an attendance of matter and body without ſpirit, when they themſelves of an inferior nature, would be loth to ſit down contented with an outſide ſervice from thoſe that belong to them: ſo that this inſtruction of our Saviour, that God is to be worſhipped in ſpirit and truth, is conformable to the ſentiments of nature, and drawn from the moſt undeniable principles of it. The excellency of God's nature, and the excellent conſtitution of human faculties, concur naturally to ſupport this perſuaſion: this was as natural to be known by men, as the neceſſity of juſtice and temperance for the ſupport of human ſocieties and bodies. It is to be feared that if there be not among us ſuch brutiſh apprehenſions, there are ſuch brutiſh dealings with God in our ſervices againſt the light of nature; when we place all our worſhip of God in outward attendances and drooping countenances, with unbelieving frames and formal devotions; when prayer is muttered over in private ſlightly, as a parrot learns leſſons by rote, not underſtanding what it ſpeaks, or to what end it ſpeaks it; not glorifying God in thought and ſpirit, with underſtanding and will.

Spiritual worſhip therefore was always required

by God, and always offered to him by one or other. Man had a perpetual obligation upon him to ſuch a worſhip from the nature of God, and what is founded upon the nature of God is unvariable. This and that particular mode of worſhip may wax old as a garment, and as a veſture may be folded up and changed, as the expreſſion is of the heavens: but God endures for ever; his ſpirituality fails not; therefore a worſhip of him in ſpirit muſt run through all ways and rites of worſhip. God muſt ceaſe to be ſpirit, before any ſervice but that which is ſpiritual, can be accepted by him. The light of nature is the light of God; the light of nature being unchangeable, what was dictated by that, was always and will always be required by God. The worſhip of God being perpetually due from the creature, the worſhipping him as God is as perpetually his right. Though the outward expreſſions of this honour were different—one way in Paradiſe, (for a worſhip was then due, ſince a ſolemn time for that worſhip was appointed) another under the law; another under the goſpel: the angels alſo worſhip God in heaven, and fall down before his throne; yet, though they differ in rites, they agree in this neceſſary ingredient: all rites, though of a different ſhape, muſt be offered to him, not as carcaſſes, but animated with the affections of the ſoul. Abel's ſacrifice had not been ſo excellent in God's eſteem, without thoſe gracious habits and affections working in his ſoul. Faith works by love; his heart was on fire as well as his ſacrifice. Cain reſted upon his preſent, perhaps thought he had obliged God; he depended upon the outward ceremony, but ſought not for the inward purity: it was an offering brought to the Lord; he had the right object but not the right manner, Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted?* and in the command afterwards to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect,* was the direction in all our religious acts and walkings

kings with God. A ſincere act of the mind and will, looking above and beyond all ſymbols; extending the ſoul to a pitch far above the body, and ſeeing the day of Chriſt through the veil of the ceremonies, was required by God and though Moſes by God's order had inſtituted a multitude of carnal ordinances, ſacrifices, waſhings, oblations of ſenſible things, and recommended to the people the diligent obſervation of thoſe ſtatutes, by the allurements of promiſes, and denouncing of threatnings; as if there were nothing elſe to be regarded, and the true workings of grace were to be buried under a heap of ceremonies; yet ſometimes he doth point them to the inward worſhip, and by the command of God, requires of them the circumciſion of the heart, Deut. x. 16. the turning to God with all their heart, and all their ſoul, Deut. xxx. 10. whereby they might recollect, that it was the engagement of the heart, and the worſhip of the ſpirit, that was moſt agreeable to God; and that he took not any pleaſure in their obſervance of ceremonies, without true piety within, and the true purity of their thoughts.

It is therefore as much every man's duty to worſhip God in ſpirit, as it is their duty to worſhip him. Worſhip is ſo due to him as God, that he who denies it, diſowns his deity: and ſpiritual worſhip is ſo due, that he who waves it, denies his ſpirituality. It is a debt of juſtice we owe to God to worſhip him, and it is as much a debt of juſtice to worſhip him according to his nature. Worſhip is nothing elſe but a rendering to God the honour that is due to him; and therefore the right poſture of our ſpirits in it, is as much or more due, than the material worſhip in the modes of his own preſcribing; that is grounded both upon his nature and upon his command; this only upon his command; this is perpetually due, whereas the channel wherein outward worſhip runs may be dried up, and the

river diverted another way: ſuch a worſhip wherein the mind thinks of God, feels a ſenſe of God, has the ſpirit conſecrated to God, the heart glowing with affections to God: it is elſe a mocking God with a feather. A rational nature muſt worſhip God with that wherein the glory of God doth moſt ſparkle in him. God is moſt viſible in the frame of the ſoul, it is there his image glitters: he hath given us a jewel as well as a caſe, and the jewel as well as the caſe we muſt return to him: the ſpirit is God's gift, and muſt return to him: it muſt return to him in every ſervice morally, as well as it muſt return to him at laſt phyſically. It is not fit we ſhould ſerve our maker only with that which is the brute in us, and withhold from him that which doth conſtitute us reaſonable creatures; we muſt give him our bodies, but a living ſacrifice. If the ſpirit be abſent from God when the body is before him, we preſent a dead ſacrifice; it is morally dead in the duty, though it be naturally alive in the poſture and action. It is not an indifferent thing whether we ſhall worſhip God or no, nor is it an indifferent thing whether we ſhall worſhip him with our ſpirits or no: as the excellency of man's knowledge conſiſts in knowing things as they are in truth; ſo the excellency of the will in willing things as they are in goodneſs. As it is the excellency of man to know God as God; ſo it is no leſs his excellency, as well as his duty, to honour God as God. As the obligation we have to the power of God for our being, binds us to a worſhip of him; ſo the obligation we have to his bounty for faſhioning us according to his own image, binds us to an exerciſe of that part wherein his image doth conſiſt. *God hath made all things for himſelf*, Prov. xvi. 4. that is, for the evidence of his own goodneſs and wiſdom: we are therefore to render him a glory according to the excellency of his nature, diſcovered in the frame of our own:

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it is as much our ſin not to glorify and worſhip God as God, as to omit the teſtifying any reſpect at all to him. As the divine nature is the object of worſhip, ſo the divine perfections are to be honoured in worſhip: we do not honour God if we honour him not as he is; we honour him not as a ſpirit, if we think him not worthy of the ardors and raviſhing admirations of our ſpirits. If we think the devotions of the body are ſufficient for him, we contract him into the condition of our own being; and not only deny him to be a ſpiritual nature, but daſh out all thoſe perfections which he could not be poſſeſſed of, were he not a ſpirit.

The ſecond thing I am to ſhew, is, what ſpiritual worſhip is. In general the whole ſpirit is to be employed: the name of God is not ſanctified but by the engagement of our ſouls.

Worſhip is an act of the underſtanding, applying itſelf to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of his majeſty; recognizing him as the ſupreme lord and governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of his attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge: this is the ſole act of the ſpirit of man. The ſame reaſon is for all our worſhip as for our thankſgiving: this muſt be done with underſtanding, Pſa. xl. 7. *Sing ye praiſe with underſtanding*; with a knowledge and ſenſe of his greatneſs, goodneſs and wiſdom. It is alſo an act of the will, whereby the ſoul adores and reverenceth his majeſty, is raviſhed with his amiableneſs, embraceth his goodneſs, enters itſelf into an intimate communion with this moſt lovely object, and pitcheth all his affections upon him.

We muſt worſhip God underſtandingly, it is not elſe a reaſonable ſervice: the nature of God and the law of God abhor a blind offering; we muſt worſhip him heartily, elſe we offer him a dead ſacrifice: a reaſonable ſervice is that wherein the mind doth truly

truly act ſomething with God. All ſpiritual acts muſt be acts of reaſon, otherwiſe they are not human acts, becauſe they want that principle which is conſtitutive of man, and doth difference him from other creatures: acts done only by ſenſe are the acts of a brute; acts done by reaſon are the acts of a man; that which is only an act of ſenſe, cannot be an act of religion: the ſenſe, without the conduct of reaſon, is not the ſubject of religious acts, for then beaſts were capable of religion as well as men: there cannot be religion where there is not reaſon; and there cannot be the exerciſe of religion, where there is not an exerciſe of the rational faculties. Nothing can be a chriſtian act, that is not a human act: beſides, all worſhip muſt be for ſome end: the worſhip of God muſt be for God; it is by the exerciſe of our rational faculties, that we only can intend an end: an ignorant and carnal worſhip is a brutiſh worſhip.

Spiritual worſhip is a worſhip from a ſpiritual nature. Not only phyſically ſpiritual, ſo our ſouls are in their frame; but morally ſpiritual, by a renewing principle. The heart muſt be firſt caſt into the mould of the goſpel, before it can perform a worſhip required by the goſpel. Adam living in Paradiſe, might perform a ſpiritual worſhip; but Adam fallen from his rectitude, could not: we being heirs of his nature, are heirs of his impotence: reſtoration to a ſpiritual life, muſt precede any act of ſpiritual worſhip. As no work can be good, ſo no worſhip can be ſpiritual, till we are created in Chriſt. Chriſt is our life. As no natural action can be performed without life in the root or heart, ſo no ſpiritual act without Chriſt in the ſoul: our being in Chriſt, is as neceſſary to every ſpiritual act, as the union of our ſoul with our body, is neceſſary to natural action. Nothing can exceed the limits of its nature; for then it ſhould exceed itſelf in acting, and do that which it hath no principle to do.

do. A beaſt cannot act like a man, without partaking of the nature of a man; nor a man act like an angel, without partaking of the angelical nature: how can we perform ſpiritual acts, without a ſpiritual principle? Whatſoever worſhip proceeds from the corrupted nature, cannot deſerve the title of ſpiritual worſhip, becauſe it ſprings not from a ſpiritual habit. If thoſe that are evil cannot ſpeak good things, thoſe that are carnal cannot offer a ſpiritual ſervice. Poiſon is the fruit of a viper's nature. Mat. xii. 34. *O, generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, ſpeak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth ſpeaks.* As the root is, ſo is the fruit. If the ſoul be habitually carnal, the worſhip cannot be actually ſpiritual: there may be an intention of ſpirit, but there is no ſpiritual principle as a root of that intention. A heart may be ſenſibly united with a duty, when it is not ſpiritually united with Chriſt in it. Carnal motives and carnal ends, may fix the mind in act of worſhip, as the ſenſe of ſome preſſing affliction may enlarge a man's mind in prayer. Whatſoever is agreeable to the nature of God, muſt have a ſtamp of Chriſt upon it; a ſtamp of his grace in performance, as well as of his meditaion in the acceptance. The apoſtle lived not, but Chriſt lived in him; the ſoul worſhips not, but Chriſt in him: not that Chriſt performs the act of worſhip; but enables us ſpiritually to worſhip after he enables us ſpiritually to live. As God counts not any ſoul living but in Chriſt, ſo he counts not any a ſpiritual worſhipper but in Chriſt. The goodneſs and fatneſs of the fruit comes from the fatneſs of the olive wherein we are engrafted: we muſt find healing in Chriſt's wings, before God can find ſpirituality in our ſervices. All worſhip, iſſuing from a dead nature, is but a dead ſervice: a living action cannot be performed, without being knit to a living root.

Spiritual

Spiritual worſhip is done by the influence, and with the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God. A heart may be ſpiritual, when a particular act of worſhip may not be ſpiritual. The Spirit may dwell in the heart, when he may ſuſpend his influence on the act. Our worſhip is then ſpiritual, when the fire that kindles our affections comes from heaven, as that fire upon the altar wherewith the ſacrifices were conſumed. God taſtes a ſweetneſs in no ſervice, but as it is dreſſed up by the hand of the Mediator, and hath the air of his own Spirit in it: they are but natural acts, without a ſupernatural aſſiſtance: without an actual influence, we cannot act from ſpiritual motives, nor for ſpiritual ends, nor in a ſpiritual manner. We cannot mortify a luſt without the Spirit, nor quicken a ſervice without the Spirit. Whatſoever corruption is killed, is ſlain by his power; whatſoever duty is ſpiritualized, is refined by his breath. He quickens our dead bodies in our reſurrection; he renews our dead ſouls in our regeneration; he quickens our carnal ſervices in our adorations: the choiceſt acts of worſhip are but infirmities, without his auxiliary help. We are logs, unable to move ourſelves, till he raiſes our faculties to a pitch agreeable to God; puts his hand to the duty, and lifts that up and us with it. Never any great act was performed by the apoſtles to God, or for God, but they are ſaid to be filled with the Holy Ghoſt. Chriſt could not have been conceived immaculate as that holy thing, without the Spirit's overſhadowing the virgin; nor any ſpiritual act conceived in our heart, without the Spirit's moving upon us, to bring forth a living religion from us. The acts of worſhip are ſaid to be in the ſpirit, ſupplication in the ſpirit; not only with the ſtrength and affection of our own ſpirits, but with the mighty operation of the Holy Ghoſt, if Jude may be the interpreter. The Holy Ghoſt exciting us; impelling us, and firing our ſouls

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by his divine flame; raiſing up the affections, and making the ſoul cry with a holy importunity, Abba Father. To render our worſhip ſpiritual, we ſhould, before every engagement in it, implore the actual preſence of the Spirit, without which, we are not able to ſend forth one ſpiritual breath or groan; but be wind-bound, like a ſhip without a gale, and our worſhip be no better than carnal. How doth the ſpouſe ſolicit the Spirit with an *awake, O north wind, and come thou ſouth wind, &c.*

Spiritual worſhip is done with ſincerity. When the heart ſtands right to God, and the ſoul performs what it pretends to perform: when we ſerve God with our ſpirits, as the Apoſtle, Rom. i. 9. *God is my witneſs, whom I ſerve with my ſpirit in the goſpel of his Son*: this is not meant of the Holy Ghoſt; for the Apoſtle would never have called the Spirit of God, his own ſpirit; but with my ſpirit, that is, a ſincere frame of heart. A carnal worſhip, whether under the law or goſpel, is when we are buſied about external rites, without an inward compliance of ſoul. God demands the heart; *My ſon, give me thy heart*; not give me thy tongue, or thy lips, or thy hands; theſe may be given without the heart, but the heart can never be beſtowed without theſe as its attendants. A heap of ſervices can be no more welcome to God, without our ſpirits, than all Jacob's ſons could be to Joſeph, without the Benjamin he deſired to ſee. God is not taken with the cabinet, but with the jewel. He firſt reſpected Abel's faith and ſincerity, and then his ſacrifice; he diſreſpected Cain's infidelity and hypocriſy, and then his offering. For this cauſe he rejected the offerings of the Jews, the prayers of the Phariſees, and the alms of Annanias and Sapphira, becauſe their hearts and their duties were at a diſtance from one another. In all ſpiritual ſacrifices, our ſpirits are God's portion. Under the law, the reins were to be conſumed by the fire on the altar,

altar, becauſe the ſecret intentions of the heart were ſignified by them, Pſa. vii. 9. *The Lord trieth the heart and the reins.* It was an ill omen among the heathen, if the victim wanted a heart. The widow's mites with her heart in them, were more eſteemed than the richer offerings without it. Not the quantity of ſervice, but the will in it, is of an account with this infinite Spirit. All that was to be brought for the framing of the tabernacle, was to be offered *willingly with the heart.* The more of will, the more of ſpirituality and acceptableneſs to God, Pſa. cxix. 108. *Accept the free will offering of my lips.* The heart is moſt like to the object of worſhip: the heart in the body is the ſpring of all vital actions; and a ſpiritual ſoul is the ſpring of all ſpiritual actions. How can we imagine God can delight in the mere ſervice of the body, any more than we can delight to converſe with a carcaſe?

Without the heart it is no worſhip: It is a ſtage play; an acting a part, without being that perſon really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a ſtage player. We may as well ſay a man may believe with his body, as worſhip God only with it. Faith, is a great ingredient in worſhip, and it is *with the heart man believes unto righteouſneſs.* We may be truly ſaid to worſhip God, though we want perfection; but we cannot be ſaid to worſhip him, if we want ſincerity: a ſtatue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a ſervice; it wants only a voice, the geſtures and poſtures are the ſame; nay, the ſervice is better; it is not a mockery, it repreſents all that it can be framed to: but to worſhip without our ſpirits, is a preſenting God with a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing elſe; a compliment; a mere lie; *a compaſſing him about with lies.* Without the heart, the tongue is a liar, and the greateſt zeal, diſſembling within him. To preſent

preſent the ſpirit, is to preſent with that which can never naturally die; to preſent him only the body, is to preſent him that which is every day crumbling to duſt, and will at laſt lie rotten in the grave: to offer him a few rags, eaſily torn; a ſkin for a ſacrifice, a thing unworthy the majeſty of God: a fixed eye and elevated hands, with a ſleepy heart and earthly ſoul, are pitiful things for an ever bleſſed and glorious Spirit: nay, it is ſo far from being ſpiritual, that it is blaſphemy. To pretend to be a Jew outwardly, without being ſo inwardly, is, in the judgment of Chriſt, to blaſpheme: and is not the ſame title to be given with as much reaſon to thoſe that pretend a worſhip, and perform none? ſuch a one is not a ſpiritual worſhipper, but a blaſpheming devil in Samuel's mantle.

Spiritual worſhip is performed with a ſpiritual activity and ſenſibleneſs of God; with an active underſtanding to meditate on his excellency, and an active will to embrace him when he drops upon the ſoul. If we underſtand the amiableneſs of God, our affections will be raviſhed; if we underſtand the immenſity of his goodneſs, our ſpirits will be enlarged. We are to act with the higheſt intention, ſuitable to the greatneſs of that God with whom we have to do, Pſa. cl. 2. *Praiſe him according to his excellent greatneſs:* not that we can worſhip him equally, but in ſome proportion; the frame of the heart is to be ſuited to the excellency of the object: our ſpiritual ſtrength is to be put out to the utmoſt, as creatures that act naturally do: the ſun ſhines and the fire burns to the utmoſt of their natural power. This is ſo neceſſary, that David, a ſpiritual worſhipper, prays for it before he ſets upon acts of adoration, Pſa. lxxx. 18. *Quicken us, that we may daily call upon thy name.* As he was loth to have a drowſy faculty, he was loth to have a drowſy inſtrument, and would willingly have them

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as lively as himſelf, Pſa. lvii. 8. *Awake up my glory; awake pſaltery and harp; I myſelf will awake early*: How would this divine ſoul ſcrew himſelf up to God, and be turned into nothing but a holy flame? Our ſouls muſt be boiling hot when we ſerve the Lord. The heart doth no leſs burn when it ſpiritually comes to God, than when God doth ſpiritually approach to it. A Nabal's heart, one as cold as a ſtone, cannot offer up a ſpiritual ſervice.

Whatſoever is enjoined us as our duty, ought to be performed with the greateſt intenſeneſs of our ſpirit. As it is our duty to pray, ſo it is our duty to pray with the moſt fervent importunity. It is our duty to love God, but with the pureſt and moſt ſublime affections: every command of God requires the whole ſtrength of the creature to be employed in it. That love to God, wherein all our duty to God is ſummed up, is to be with all our ſtrength, with all our might, &c. though in the covenant of grace, he hath mitigated the ſeverity of the law, and requires not from us ſuch an elevation of our affections, as was poſſible in the ſtate of innocence, yet God requires of us the utmoſt moral induſtry, to raiſe our affections to a pitch, at leaſt equal to what they are in other things: what ſtrength of affection we naturally have, ought to be as much and more excited in acts of worſhip than upon other occaſions and our ordinary works. As there was an inactivity of ſoul in worſhip and a quickneſs to ſin, when ſin had the dominion; ſo when the ſoul is ſpiritualized, the temper is changed, there is an inactivity to ſin, and an ardor in duty: the more the ſoul is dead to ſin, the more it is alive to God, and the more lively too in all that concerns God and his honour. For grace being a new ſtrength added to our natural, determines the affections to new objects, and excites them to a greater vigor. And as the hatred of ſin is more ſharp, the love to every thing that deſtroys the dominion

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of it, is more ſtrong. And acts of worſhip may be reckoned as the chiefeſt batteries againſt the power of this inbred enemy. When the Spirit is in the ſoul, like the rivers of waters flowing out of the belly, the ſoul hath the activity of a river, and makes haſte to be ſwallowed up in God, as the ſtreams of the river in the ſea. Chriſt makes his people kings and prieſts to God; firſt kings, then prieſts: gives firſt a royal temper of heart, that they may offer ſpiritual ſacrifices as prieſts: kings and prieſts to God, acting with a magnificent ſpirit in all their motions to him: we cannot be ſpiritual prieſts, till we be ſpiritual kings. The Spirit appeared in the likeneſs of fire, and where he reſides, communicates, like fire, purity and activity.

The third general head is, why a ſpiritual worſhip is due to God, and to be offered to him. We muſt conſider the object of worſhip, and the ſubject of worſhip, the worſhipper and the worſhipped God is a ſpiritual being; man is a reaſonable creature. The nature of God informs us, what is fit to be preſented to him; our own nature informs us, what is fit to be preſented by us.

The beſt we have is to be preſented to God in worſhip; for ſince God is the moſt excellent being, he is to be ſerved by us with the moſt excellent thing we have, and with the choiceſt veneration. God is ſo incomprehenſibly excellent, that we cannot render him what he deſerves; we muſt render him what we are able to offer; the beſt of our affections; the flower of our ſtrength; the cream and top of our ſpirits. By the ſame reaſon that we are bound to give to God the beſt worſhip, we muſt offer it to him in the beſt manner. We cannot give to God any thing too good for ſo bleſſed a being: God being a great king, ſlight ſervices become not his majeſty: it is unbecoming the majeſty of God, and the reaſon of a creature,

to give him a trivial thing: it is unworthy of us to beſtow the beſt of our ſtrength on our luſt, and the worſt and weakeſt in the ſervice of God. An infinite ſpirit, ſhould have affections as near to infinite as we can: as he is a ſpirit without bounds, ſo he ſhould have a ſervice without limits: when we have given him all, we cannot ſerve him according to the excellency of his nature; and ſhall we give him leſs than all? his infinite excellency and our dependance on him as creatures, demands the choiceſt adoration: our ſpirits being the nobleſt part of our nature, are as due to him, as the ſervice of our bodies, which are the vileſt: to ſerve him with the worſt only, is to diminiſh this honour.

Under the law, God commanded the beſt to be offered him: he would have the males, the beſt of the kind; the fat, the beſt of the creature: he commanded them to offer him the firſtlings of the flock; not the firſtlings of the womb, but the firſtlings of the year: the Jewiſh cattle having two breeding times; in the beginning of the ſpring, and the beginning of September; the latter breed was the weaker, which Jacob knew, when he laid the rods before the cattle, when they were ſtrong in the ſpring, and withheld them when they were feeble in the autumn. One reaſon, as the Jews ſay, why God accepted not the offering of Cain was, becauſe he brought the meaneſt, not the beſt of the fruit; and therefore it is ſaid, only that he brought of the fruit of the ground, Gen. iv. 3. not the firſt of the fruit, or the beſt of the fruit; as Abel, who brought the firſtling of his flock, and the fat thereof, ver. 4.

God hath given us the choiceſt things he had. A Redeemer, that was the power of God, and the wiſdom of God: the beſt he had in heaven, his own ſon, and in himſelf, a ſacrifice for us, that we might be enabled to preſent ourſelves a ſacri-

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fice to him. And Chriſt offered himſelf for us, the beſt he had, and that with the ſtrength of the deity through the eternal Spirit; and ſhall we grudge God the beſt part of ourſelves? as God would have a worſhip from his creature, ſo it muſt be with the beſt part of his creature. If we have given ourſelves to the Lord, we can worſhip with no leſs than ourſelves. What is the man without his ſpirit? If we are to worſhip God with all that we have received from him, we muſt worſhip him with the beſt part we have received from him: it is but a ſmall glory we can give him with the beſt, and ſhall we deprive him of his right, by giving him the worſt? as what we are, is from God; ſo what we are, ought to be for God. Creation is the foundation of worſhip, Pſa c. 2, 3. *Serve the Lord with gladneſs: know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us:* He hath ennobled us with ſpiritual affections; where is it fitteſt for us to employ them, but upon him? and at what time, but when we come ſolemnly to converſe with him? Is it juſtice to deny him the honour of his beſt gift to us? Our ſouls are more his gift to us, than any thing in the world: other things are ſo given that they are often taken from us, but our ſpirits are the moſt durable gift Rational faculties cannot be removed without a diſſolution of nature.

Well then, as he is God, he is to be honoured with all the propenſions and ardor, that the infiniteneſs and excellency of ſuch a being requires, and the incomparable obligations he hath laid upon us in this ſtate, deſerve at our hands: in all our worſhip therefore, our minds ought to be filled with the higheſt admiration, love and reverence. Since our end was to glorify God, we anſwer not our end, and honour him not, unleſs we give him the choiceſt we have.

To make uſe of this.—Firſt, it ſerves for information. If ſpiritual worſhip be required by God,

how ſad is it for them that are ſo far from giving God a ſpiritual worſhip, that they render him no worſhip at all? I ſpeak not of the neglect of public, but of private; when men preſent not a devotion to God from one year's end to the other. The ſpeech of our Saviour, that we muſt worſhip God in ſpirit and truth, implies that a worſhip is due to him from every one: that is the common impreſſion upon the conſciences of all men in the world, if they have not by ſome conſtant courſe in groſs ſins, hardened their ſouls, and ſtifled thoſe natural ſentiments.

Let us examine ourſelves at the end of every act of worſhip, and chide ourſelves for any carnality we perceive in them. Let us take a review of them, and examine the reaſon; why art thou ſo low and carnal, O my ſoul? As David did of his diſquietedneſs, Pſa. xlii. 5. *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art thou diſquieted within me?* If any unworthy frames have ſurpriſed us in worſhip, let us ſeek them out after worſhip; call them to the bar; make an exact ſcrutiny into the cauſes of them, that we may prevent their incurſions another time; let our pulſes beat quick, by way of anger and indigation againſt them: this would be a repairing what hath been amiſs; otherwiſe they may grow, and clog an after worſhip more than they did a former. Daily examination is an antidote againſt the temptations of the following day, and conſtant examination of our ſelves after duty, is a preſervative againſt vain encroachments in following duties; and upon the finding them out, let us apply the blood of Chriſt by faith for our cure, and draw ſtrength from the death of Chriſt for the conqueſt of them, and let us alſo be humbled for them. God lifts up the humble: when we are humbled for our carnal frames in one duty, we ſhall find ourſelves by the grace of God more elevated in the next.

The Eternity of God.

Pſalm xc. 2.

BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BROUGHT FORTH, OR EVER THOU HADST FORMED THE EARTH AND THE WORLD; EVEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD.

THE title of this pſalm is a prayer—the author, Moſes. Some think not only this, but the ten following pſalms were compoſed by him. The title wherewith he is dignified, is the man of God, as alſo in Deut. xxxiii. 1. One inſpired by him, to be his interpreter, and deliver his oracles; one particularly directed by him: one, who as a ſervant, did diligently employ himſelf in his maſter's buſineſs, and acted for the glory of God; he was the miniſter of the old teſtament, and the prophet of the new.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or before they were begotten or born; the word being uſed in thoſe ſenſes in ſcripture; before they ſtood up higher than the reſt of the earthly maſs God had created. It ſeems that mountains were not caſually caſt up by the force of the deluge, ſoftning the ground, and driving ſeveral parcels of it together, to grow up into a maſſy body, as the ſea doth the ſand in ſeveral places; but they were at firſt formed by God.

The eternity of God is here deſcribed,

1. In his priority, *before the world.*

2. In the extention of his duration, *from everlaſting to everlaſting thou art God.*

He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends: he is not a temporary, but an eternal God: It takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after: though the eternity of God be one permanent ſtate without ſucceſſion, yet the Spirit of God, ſuiting himſelf to the weakneſs of our conception, divides it into two parts one; paſt, before the foundation of the world; another to come, after the deſtruction of the world; as he did exiſt before all ages, and as he will exiſt after all ages.

In this doctrine I ſhall ſhew, 1. How God is eternal, or in what reſpects eternity is his property. 2. That he is eternal, and muſt needs be ſo. 3. That eternity is only proper to God, and not common to him with any creature. 4. The uſe.

Firſt, How God is eternal, or in what reſpects he is ſo. Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any meaſures of time, as immenſity is a denying of him any bounds of place: as immenſity is the diffuſion of his eſſence, ſo eternity is the duration of his eſſence; and, when we ſay God is eternal, we exclude from him all poſſibility of beginning and ending—all flux and change. As the eſſence of God cannot be bounded by any place, ſo it is not to be limitted by any time; as it is his immenſity to be every where, ſo it is his eternity to be always. As created things are ſaid to be ſomewhere in regard of place, and to be preſent, paſt, or future, in regard of time; ſo the Creator, in regard of place, is every where; in regard of time, is *ſemper*. His duration is as endleſs, as his eſſence is boundleſs; he always was, and always will be, and will no more have an end, than he had a beginning; and this is an excellency belonging to the

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ſupreme being. As his eſſence comprehends all beings and exceeds them, and his immenſity ſurmounts all places; ſo his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them.

1. God is without beginning. In the beginning God created the world: God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be ſet wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, ſo is God before all his creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the everlaſting God—the eternal God: it is oppoſed to the heathen gods, which were but of yesterday, new coined, and ſo new; but the eternal God was before the world was made: in that ſenſe it is to be underſtood, *The myſtery which was kept ſecret ſince the world began, but now is made manifeſt; and by the ſcriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the everlaſting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The goſpel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary God, but of that God, that was before all ages; though the manifeſtation of it be in time, yet the purpoſe and reſolve of it was from eternity.

If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a decreer before the foundation of the world: before the foundation of the world he loved Chriſt as a mediator: a fore-ordination of him was before the foundation of the world; a choice of men, and therefore a chooſer before the foundation of the world; a grace given in Chriſt before the world began, and therefore a donor of that grace. From thoſe places, ſaith Crellius, it appears that God was before the foundation of the world, but they do not aſſert an abſolute eternity; but to be before all creatures, is equivalent to his being from eternity. Time began with the foundation of the world, but God being before

time, could have no beginning in time: before the beginning of the creation, and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity; nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was without beginning. To be in time, is, to have a beginning; to be before all time, is never to have a beginning, but always to be: for as between the creator and creatures there is no medium, ſo between time and eternity, there is no medium. It is as eaſily deduced, that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God: if he had a beginning, he muſt have it from another, or from himſelf; if from another, that from whom he received his being would be better than he, ſo more a God than he. He cannot be God, that is not ſupreme; he cannot be ſupreme that owes his being to the power of another: he would not be ſaid only to have immortality as he is, if he had it dependent upon another; nor could he have a beginning from himſelf; if he had given beginning to himſelf, then he was once nothing, there was a time when he was not; if he was not, how could he be the cauſe of himſelf? It is impoſſible for any, to give a beginning and being to itſelf: if it acts, it muſt exiſt; and ſo exiſt, before it exiſted: a thing would exiſt as a cauſe, before it exiſted as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cauſe that he is; if therefore God doth exiſt, and hath not his being from another, he muſt exiſt from eternity: therefore, when we ſay God is of and from himſelf, we mean not that God gave being to himſelf; but it is negatively to be underſtood, that he hath no cauſe of exiſtence without himſelf.

Whatſoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before thoſe; he is therefore called the Ancient of Days, as being before all days and time, and eminently containing in himſelf

himſelf all times and ages: though indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will teſtify that he is decaying, and ſhortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would ſignify that he was not long before. All created things are new and freſh; but no creature can find out any beginning of God: it is impoſſible there ſhould be any beginning of him.

2. God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what he is; he remains always the ſame in being; ſo far from any change, that no ſhadow of it can touch him: he will continue in being, as long as he hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add never ſo many millions of years together, we are ſtill as far from an end, as from a beginning; for *the Lord ſhall endure for ever*: as it is impoſſible he ſhould not be, being from all eternity; ſo it is impoſſible that he ſhould not be to all eternity. The ſcripture is moſt plentiful in teſtimonies of this eternity of God, *á parte poſt*: or after the creation of the world: he is ſaid to live for ever. The earth ſhall periſh, but God ſhall endure for ever, and his years ſhall have no end. Plants and animals grow up from ſmall beginnings; arrive to their full growth and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in God by all the revolutions of time: hence ſome think the incorruptibility of the deity was ſignified by the ſhittim, or cedar wood, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature.

That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what ſhould make him ceaſe to be what eternally he hath been, or put a ſtop to the continuance of his perfections? He cannot will his own deſtruction, that is againſt univerſal nature in all things to ceaſe from being, if they can preſerve themſelves. He cannot deſert

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his own being, becauſe he cannot but love himſelf as the beſt and chiefeſt good. The reaſon that any thing decays, is either its own native weakneſs, or a ſuperior power of ſomething contrary to it: there is no weakneſs in the nature of God that can introduce any corruption, becauſe he is infinitely ſimple without any mixture; nor can he be overpowered by any thing elſe; a weaker cannot hurt him, and a ſtronger than he there cannot be; nor can he be outwitted or circumvented, becauſe of his infinite wiſdom: as he hath received his being from none, ſo he cannot be deprived of it by any; as he doth neceſſarily exiſt, ſo he doth neceſſarily always exiſt: this indeed is the property of God; nothing ſo proper to him, as always to be. Whatſoever perfections any being hath, if it be not eternal, it is not divine. God only is immortal; he only is ſo by a neceſſity of nature: angels, ſouls and bodies to, after the reſurrection, ſhall be immortal; not by nature, but grant; they are ſubject to return to nothing, if that word that raiſed them from nothing ſhould ſpeak them into nothing again: it is as eaſy with God to ſtrip them of it, as to inveſt them with it; nay, it is impoſſible but that they ſhould periſh, if God ſhould withdraw his power from preſerving them, which he exerted in creating them: but God is immovably fixed in his own being; that as none gave him his life, ſo none can deprive him of his life, or the leaſt particle of it; not a jot of the happineſs and life, which God infinitely poſſeſſes, can be loſt: it will be as durable to everlaſting, as it hath been poſſeſſed from everlaſting.

3. There is no ſucceſſion in God. God is without ſucceſſion or change; it is a part of eternity; *from everlaſting to everlaſting, he is God*, i. e. the ſame. God doth not always remain in being, but he remains the ſame in that being, *thou art the ſame*. The being of creatures is ſucceſſive; the being of God

God is permanent, and remains intire, with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed, the firſt notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which notes to us the duration of a being in regard of its exiſtence; but to have no ſucceſſion, nothing firſt or laſt, notes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its eſſence.

The creatures are in a perpetual flux; ſomething is acquired, or ſomething loſt every day. A man is the ſame in regard of exiſtence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new ſucceſſion of quantities and qualities in him; every day he acquires ſomething till he comes to his maturity; every day he loſeth ſomething till he comes to his period. A man is not the ſame at night that he was in the morning; ſomething is expired, and ſomething is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his ſubſtance, a change in his accidents: but God hath his whole being in one and the ſame point, or moment of eternity; he receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he looſeth nothing of what he was before; he is always the ſame excellency and perfection in the ſame infiniteneſs as ever; his years do not fail, his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to-morrow or yeſterday with him. As nothing is paſt or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are preſent, ſo nothing is paſt or future in regard of his eſſence; he is not in his eſſence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now: all his perfections are moſt perfect in him every moment, before all ages, after all ages; as he hath his whole eſſence undivided in every place, as well as in an immenſe ſpace; ſo he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time. Some illuſtrate the difference between eternity and time, by the ſimilitude of a tree, or a rock ſtanding upon the ſide of a river, or ſhore of the

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ſea; the tree ſtands always the ſame and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot; the flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverſe reſpect, and relation of preſence to the various parts of the river as they flow; the waters of the river preſs on, and puſh forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the ſame the next; ſo are all ſublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no ſubſtantial change, yet they have an accidental, for the actions of the angels this day, are not the ſame individual actions which they performed yesterday—But in God there is no change, he always remains the ſame.

Of a creature it may be ſaid, he was, or he is, or ſhall be; of God it cannot be ſaid, but only he is; he is what he always was, and he is what he always will be: whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now; as it may be ſaid of the flame of a candle, it is flame; but it is not the ſame individual flame as it was before, nor is it the ſame that will be preſently after; there is a continual diſſolution of it into air, and a continual ſupply for the generation of more; while it continues, it may be ſaid there is a flame, yet not entirely one, but in a ſucceſſion of parts: ſo, of a man it may be ſaid, he is in a ſucceſſion of parts; but he is not the ſame that he was, and will not be the ſame that he is; but God is the ſame without any ſucceſſion of parts and of time; of him it may be ſaid, he is; he is no more now than he was, and he ſhall be no more hereafter than he is. God poſſeſſes a firm and abſolute being, always conſtant to himſelf; he ſees all things ſliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his moſt glorious and immoveable nature: all other things paſs from one ſtate to another; from their original, to their eclipſe and deſtruction: but God poſſeſſes his being in one indiviſible

indiviſible point, having neither, beginning, end, nor middle.

4. There is no ſucceſſion in the knowledge of God. The variety of ſucceſſions and changes in the world, make not ſucceſſion or new objects in the divine mind; for all things are preſent to him from eternity, in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually preſent in the world in regard of their exiſtence: he doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he ſees all things at once; *known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world*. but in their true order of ſucceſſion, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a ſucceſſion and order of things as they are wrought, there is yet no ſucceſſion in God, in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that ſhall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the ſtage of the world; yet, both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be preſent with God, yet they are preſent in him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not ſo preſent with him as if they ſhould be wrought at once. The death of Chriſt was to precede his reſurrection in order of time; there is a ſucceſſion in this; both at once are known by God, yet the act of his knowledge is not exerciſed about Chriſt as dying, and riſing at the ſame time; ſo that there is ſucceſſion in things, when there is no ſucceſſion in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are paſt, preſent, and to come, in regard of their exiſtence; but they are not ſo in regard of God's knowledge of them; becauſe he ſees and knows not by any other, but by himſelf; he is his own light by which he ſees, his own glaſs wherein he ſees; beholding himſelf, he beholds all things.

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There is no ſucceſſion in the decrees of God. He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, ſo his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, ſo they are decreed at once; there is a ſucceſſion in the execution of them, firſt grace, then glory; but the purpoſe of God for the beſtowing of both, was in one and the ſame moment of eternity. *He choſe us in him before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy.* The choice of Chriſt, and the choice of ſome in him to be holy, and happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is by the eternal counſel of God, all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counſel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

5. God is his own eternity. He is not eternal by grant, and the diſpoſal of any other, but by nature and eſſence. The eternity of God, is nothing elſe but his exiſtence enduring. If eternity were any thing diſtinct from God, and not of the eſſence of God, then there would be ſomething which was not God, neceſſary to perfect God. As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, ſo eternity is the choice perfection of God, yea, the gloſs and luſtre of all others. Every perfection would be imperfect, if it were not always a perfection.

God is eſſentially whatſoever he is; and there is nothing in God but his eſſence: duration or continuance in being in creatures, differs from their being; for they might exiſt but for an inſtant; in which caſe, they may be ſaid to have being, but not duration, becauſe all duration includes *prius, et poſterius.* All creatures may ceaſe from being, if it be the pleaſure of God; they are not therefore durable by their own eſſence, and therefore are not their own duration,

ration, no more than they are their own exiſtence. And though ſome creatures, as angels, and ſouls, may be called everlaſting, as a perpetual life is communicated to them by God, yet they can never be called their own eternity; becauſe ſuch a duration is not ſimply neceſſary, nor eſſential to them, but accidental, depending upon the pleaſure of another; there is nothing in their nature that can hinder them from loſing it, if God, from whom they received it, ſhould deſign to take it away: but as God is his own neceſſity of exiſting, ſo he is his own duration in exiſting—as he doth neceſſarily exiſt by himſelf, ſo he will always neceſſarily exiſt by himſelf.

6. Hence all the perfections of God are eternal. In regard of the divine eternity, all things in God are eternal; his power, mercy, wiſdom, juſtice, and knowledge. God himſelf was not eternal, if any of his perfections, which are eſſential to him, were not eternal alſo; he had not been elſe a perfect God from all eternity, and ſo his whole ſelf had not been eternal. If any thing belonging to the nature of a thing, be wanting, it cannot be ſaid to be that thing which it ought to be. If any thing requiſite to the nature of God, had been wanting one moment, he could not have been ſaid to be an eternal God.

The ſecond thing, God is eternal. The Spirit of God in ſcripture, condeſcends to our capacities, in ſignifying the eternity of God by days and years, which are terms belonging to time, whereby we meaſure it: but we muſt no more conceive that God is bounded, or meaſured by time, and hath ſucceſſion of days, becauſe of thoſe expreſſions, than we can conclude him to have a body, becauſe members are aſcribed to him in ſcripture, to help our conceptions of his glorious nature and operations.

Though years are aſcribed to him; yet they are ſuch as cannot be numbered, cannot be finiſhed, ſince there is no proportion between the duration

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of God, and the years of men. *The number of his years cannot be ſearched out; for he makes ſmall the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof.* The numbers of the drops of rain which have fallen in all parts of the earth ſince the creation of the world, if ſubſtracted from the number of the years of God, would be found a ſmall quantity, a mere nothing to the years of God. As all the nations in the world compared with God, are but as the drop of a bucket, worſe than nothing, and vanity; ſo all the ages of the world, if compared with God, amount not to ſo much as the one hundred thouſandth part of a minute: the minutes from the creation may be numbered, but the years of the duration of God, being infinite, are without meaſure.

As one day is to the life of man, ſo are a thouſand years to the life of God: the Holy Ghoſt expreſſeth himſelf to the capacity of man, to give us ſome notion of an infinite duration, by a reſemblance ſuited to the capacity of man. If a thouſand years be but as a day to the life of God; then as a year is to the life of man, ſo are three hundred ſixty five thouſand years to the life of God: and as ſeventy years are to the life of man, ſo are twenty five millions four hundred and fifty thouſand years to the life of God: yet ſtill, ſince there is no proportion between time and eternity, we muſt dart our thoughts beyond all thoſe; for years and days meaſure only the duration of created things, and of thoſe only that are material and corporeal, ſubject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.

Sometimes this eternity is expreſſed by parts, as looking backward and forward; by the differences of time, paſt, preſent and to come, *which was, and is, and is to come.* Though this might be ſpoken of any thing in being, though but for an hour; it was the laſt minute, it is now, and it will be the

next

next minute; yet the Holy Ghoſt would declare ſomething proper to God, as including all parts of time; he always was, is now, and always ſhall be; it might always be ſaid of him he was, and it may always be ſaid of him he will be: there is no time when he began, no time when he ſhall ceaſe. It cannot be ſaid of a creature he always was, he always is what he was, and he always will be what he is: but God always is what he was, and always will be what he is; ſo that it is a very ſignificant expreſſion of the eternity of God, as can be ſuited to our capacities.

1. His eternity is evident, by the name God gives himſelf.—*And God ſaid unto Moſes, I Am That I Am; thus ſhalt thou ſay to the children of Iſrael, I Am hath ſent me unto you.* This is the the name whereby he is diſtinguiſhed from all creatures; I AM, is his proper name; the deſcription being in the preſent tenſe, ſhews that his eſſence knows no paſt, nor future: if it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be. But I Am; I Am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore at the greateſt diſtance from not being, and that is eternal. So that *is* ſignifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability: as I am ſpeaks the want of no bleſſedneſs, ſo it ſpeaks the want of no duration; and therefore the French wherever they find this word Jehovah in the ſcripture, which we tranſlate Lord, and Lord Eternal, render it The Eternal. I am always and immutably the ſame. The Eternity of God is oppoſed to the volubility of time, which is extended into paſt, preſent and to come. Our time is but a ſmall drop, as a ſand to all the atoms and ſmall particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded ſea of being; *I am that I am, i. e.* an infinite life. I have not that now, which I had not formerly;

I ſhall not afterwards have that which I have not now; I am that in every moment which I was, and will be in all moments of time; nothing can be added to me, nothing can be detracted from me: there is nothing ſuperior to him, which can detract from him; nothing deſirable that can be added to him. Now if there were any beginning and end of God, any ſucceſſion in him, he could not be I Am; for in regard of what was paſt he would not be, in regard of what was to come he is not yet: and upon this account a heathen argues well, of all creatures it may be ſaid they were, or they will be; but of God it cannot be ſaid any thing elſe but *eſt*, God is, becauſe he fills an eternal duration: a creature cannot be ſaid to be, if it be not yet, nor if it be not now, but hath been.

God only can be called I am; all creatures have more of not being than being; for every creature was nothing from eternity, before it was made ſomething in time; and if it be corruptible in its whole nature, it will be nothing to eternity after it hath been ſomething in time; and if it be not corruptible in its nature, as the angels; or in every part of its nature, as man in regard of his ſoul; yet it hath not properly a being, becauſe it is dependant upon the pleaſure of God, to continue it, or deprive it of it; and while it is, it is mutable, and all mutability is a mixture of not being: if God therefore be properly I am, *i. e.* being, it follows that he always was; for if he were not always, he muſt, as was argued before, be produced by ſome other, or by himſelf; by another he could not, then he had not been God but a creature; nor by himſelf, for then as producing, he muſt be before himſelf, as produced; he had been before he was: and he always will be, for being I Am, having all being in himſelf, and the fountain of all being to every thing elſe, how can he ever have his name changed to I am not?

2. *God*

2. *God hath life in himſelf,* John v. 26. *The Father hath life in himſelf*; he is the living God, therefore ſtedfaſt for ever: he hath life by his eſſence, not by participation; he is a ſun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives neither from any thing; and therefore he hath an unlimitted life, not a drop of life but a fountain, not a ſpark of a limitted life but a life tranſcending all bounds: he hath life in himſelf: all creatures have their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himſelf doth neceſſarily exiſt, and could never be made to exiſt; for then he had not life in himſelf, but in that which made him to exiſt, and gave him life; what doth neceſſarily exiſt therefore, exiſts from eternity; what hath being of itſelf, could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, becauſe it hath being from its eſſence without influence of any efficient cauſe.

When God pronounced his name, *I am that I am,* angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thouſand four hundred years; Moſes, to whom he then ſpeaks, was in being; yet, God only is, becauſe he only hath the fountain of being in himſelf, but all that they were, was a rivulet from him; he hath from nothing elſe, that he doth ſubſiſt; every thing elſe hath its ſubſiſtence from him as their root, as the beam from the ſun, as the rivers and fountains from the ſea. All life is ſeated in God, as in its proper throne; in its moſt perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally: he is a pure act, nothing but vigor and act; he hath by his nature that life, which others have by his grant; whence the apoſtle ſaith, not only that he is immortal, but he hath immortality in a full poſſeſſion; fee-ſimple, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himſelf. He that hath life in himſelf, and is from himſelf, cannot but be: he always was,

becauſe he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any ſpace before he did exiſt, then there was ſomething which made him to exiſt; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being, would be God. And to ſay, God ſprung into being by chance, when we ſee nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath ſome cauſe of its exiſtence, would be vain; for ſince God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth ſomething; and by the ſame reaſon that he ſprung up by chance, he might totally vaniſh by chance. What a ſtrange notion of a God would this be, ſuch a God that had no life in himſelf, but from chance?

Since he hath life in himſelf, and that there was no cauſe of his exiſtence; he can have no cauſe of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itſelf, hath life without bounds, and can never deſert it, nor be deprived of it: ſo that he lives neceſſarily, and it is abſolutely impoſſible that he ſhould not live; whereas all things live, and move, and have their being in him; and as they live by his will, ſo they can return to nothing at his word.

3. If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatſoever begins, is changed in its paſſing from not being to being: it began to be what it was not, and if it ends, it ceaſeth to be what it was; it cannot therefore be ſaid to be God, if there were either beginning or ending, or ſucceſſion in it. Mal. iii. 6. *I am the Lord, I change not.* Job xxxvii. 23. *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out.* God argues here, ſaith Calvin, from his unchangeable

unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his purpoſe: had he not been eternal, there had been the greateſt change from nothing to ſomething: a change of eſſence, is greater than a change of purpoſe. God is a ſun glittering always in the ſame glory; no growing up in youth; no paſſing on to age: if he were not without ſucceſſion, ſtanding in one point of eternity, there would be a change from paſt to preſent, from preſent to future. The eternity of God is a ſhield againſt all kind of mutability. If any thing ſprang up in the eſſence of God that was not there before, he could not be ſaid to be either an eternal, or an unchanged ſubſtance.

4. God could not be an infinitely perfect being, if he were not eternal. A finite duration is inconſiſtent with infinite perfection. Whatſoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot ſwallow up all perfections in itſelf. God hath an unſearchable perfection. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* He cannot be found out, he is infinite, becauſe he is incomprehenſible: incomprehenſibility ariſeth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the ſhort line of man's underſtanding: his eſſence, in regard of its diffuſion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehenſible, as well as his action: if God therefore had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not poſſeſs the higheſt perfection, becauſe a perfection might be conceived beyond it; if his being could fail, he were not perfect: can that deſerve the name of the higheſt perfection, which is capable of corruption and diſſolution? To be finite and limitted, is the greateſt imperfection, for it conſiſts in a denial of being. He could not be the moſt bleſſed being, if he were not always ſo, and ſhould not for ever remain to be ſo; and whatſoever perfections he had, would be ſoured by the thoughts, that in time they

would ceaſe, and ſo could not be pure perfections, becauſe not permanent; but he is bleſſed from everlaſting to everlaſting. Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfections without limitation; he would have been limitted by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himſelf, and ſo more perfect than he: but ſince God is the moſt ſovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined perfecter, by the moſt capacious underſtanding, he is certainly eternal; being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be omnipotent, almighty, if he were not eternal. The title almighty, agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatſoever hath a beginning, was once nothing, and when it was nothing, could act nothing. Where there is no being, there is no power. Neither doth the title of almighty agree with a periſhing nature: he can do nothing to purpoſe, that cannot preſerve himſelf againſt the outward force and violence of enemies, or againſt the inward cauſes of corruption and diſſolution. No account is to made of man, becauſe *his breath is in his noſtrils*; could a better account be made of God, if he were of the like condition? he could not properly be almighty, that were not always mighty: if he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him; he that hath all power, can have no hurt: if he doth whatſoever he pleaſeth, nothing can make him miſerable, ſince miſery conſiſts in thoſe things which happen againſt our will. The almightineſs and eternity of God are linked together: *I am* Alpha *and* Omega, *the beginning and ending, ſaith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty:* Almighty becauſe eternal, and *eternal* becauſe *almighty.*

6. God would not be the firſt cauſe of all if he were not eternal; but he is the firſt, and the laſt; the firſt cauſe of all things, the laſt end of all things: that

that which is the firſt cannot begin to be, it were not then the firſt; it cannot ceaſe to be: whatſoever is diſſolved, is diſſolved into that whereof it doth conſiſt, which was before it, and then it was not the firſt. The world might not have been, it was once nothing; it muſt have ſome cauſe to call it out of nothing; nothing hath no power to make itſelf ſomething; there is a ſuperior cauſe, by whoſe will and power it comes into being, and ſo gives all the creatures their diſtinct forms.

This power cannot but be eternal; it muſt be before the world; the founder muſt be before the foundation; and his exiſtence muſt be from eternity, or we muſt ſay nothing did exiſt from eternity: and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time: what we ſee, and what we are, muſt ariſe from itſelf or ſome other; it cannot from itſelf: if any thing made itſelf, it had a power to make itſelf; it then had an active power before it had a being; it was ſomething in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of exiſtence at the ſame time: ſuppoſe it had a power to produce itſelf, this power muſt be conferred upon it by another; and ſo the power of producing itſelf, was not from itſelf, but from another; but if the power of being was from itſelf, why did it not produce itſelf before? why was it one moment out of being? If there be any exiſtence of things, it is neceſſary that that which was the firſt cauſe, ſhould exiſt from eternity, whatſoever was the immediate cauſe of the world, yet the firſt and chief cauſe wherein we muſt reſt, muſt have nothing before it; if it had any thing before it, it were not the firſt; he therefore that is the firſt cauſe muſt be without beginning, nothing muſt be before him; if he had a beginning from ſome other, he could not be the firſt principle and author of all things; if he be the firſt cauſe of all things, he muſt give himſelf a beginning or be from eter-

nity: he could not give himſelf a beginning; whatſoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing it could do nothing; it could not give itſelf any thing, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not: if he made himſelf in time, why did he not make himſelf before? What hindered him? it was either becauſe he could not, or becauſe he would not; if he could not, he always wanted power, and always would, unleſs it were beſtowed upon him, and then he could not be ſaid to be from himſelf? If he would not make himſelf before, then he might have made himſelf when he would: how had he the power of willing and nilling without a being? nothing cannot will or nill; nothing hath no faculties: ſo that it is neceſſary to grant ſome eternal being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny ſome eternal being, we muſt deny all being; our own being, the being of every thing about us; inconceivable abſurdities will ariſe.

So then if God were the cauſe of all things, he did exiſt before all things, and that from eternity.

The third thing is, eternity is only proper to God, and not communicable.—It is as great a madneſs to aſcribe eternity to the creature, as to deprive the Lord of the creature of eternity. It is ſo proper to God, that when the apoſtle would prove the deity of Chriſt, he proves it by his immutability and eternity, as well as his creating power: *Thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall not fail.* The argument had not ſtrength, if eternity belonged eſſentially to any but God; and therefore he is ſaid only to have immortality: all other things receive their being from him, and can be deprived of their being by him: all things depend on him, he of none: all other things are like clothes, which would conſume if God preſerved them not. Immortality is appropriated to God, *i. e.* an independent immortality. Angels and ſouls have an immortality,

mortality, but by donation from God, not by their own eſſence; dependant upon their creator, not neceſſary in their own nature: God might have annihilated them after he had created them; ſo that their duration cannot properly be called an eternity, it being extrinſical to them, and depending upon the will of their creator, by whom they may be extinguiſhed: it is not an abſolute and neceſſary, but a precarious immortality. Whatſoever is not God, is temporary: whatſoever is eternal, is God.

It is a contradiction to ſay a creature can be eternal; as nothing eternal is created, ſo nothing created is eternal. What is diſtinct from the nature of God cannot be eternal, eternity being the eſſence of God. Every creature in the notion of a creature ſpeaks a dependance on ſome cauſe, and therefore cannot be eternal. As it is repugnant to the nature of God not to be eternal, ſo it is repugnant to the nature of a creature to be eternal; for then a creature would be equal to the creator, or the cauſe would not be before the creature or effect.

It would be all one to admit many gods, as many eternals; and all one to ſay God can be created, as to ſay a creature can be uncreated, which is to be eternal.

1. Creation is a producing ſomething from nothing. What was once nothing, cannot therefore be eternal; not being was eternal; therefore its being could not be eternal, for it ſhould be then before it was, and would be ſomething when it was nothing. It is the nature of a creature to be nothing, before it was created; what was nothing before it was, cannot be equal with God in an eternity of duration.

2. There is no creature but is mutable, therefore not eternal. As it had a change from ſomething to nothing, ſo it may be changed from being

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to not being. If the creature were not mutable, it would be moſt perfect, and ſo would not be a creature, but God; for God only is moſt perfect. It is as much the eſſence of a creature to be mutable, as it is the eſſence of God to be immutable: mutability and eternity are utterly inconſiſtent.

3. No creature is infinite, therefore not eternal. To be infinite in duration is all one, as to be infinite in eſſence: it is as reaſonable to conceive a creature immenſe, filling all places at once, as eternal, extending to all ages; becauſe neither can be without infiniteneſs, which is the property of the deity. A creature may as well be without bounds of place, as limitations of time.

4. No effects of an intellectual free agent, can be equal in duration to its cauſe. The productions of natural agents are as ancient often as themſelves; the ſun produceth a beam as old in time as itſelf; but who ever heard of a piece of wiſe workmanſhip as old as the wiſe artificer? God produces a creature, not neceſſarily and naturally, as the ſun doth a beam, but freely, as an intelligent agent. The ſun was not neceſſary, it might be or not be, according to the pleaſure of God. A free act of the will is neceſſary, to precede in order of time as the cauſe of ſuch effects as are purely voluntary. Thoſe cauſes that act as ſoon as they exiſt, act naturally, neceſſarily, not freely, and cannot ceaſe from acting.

But ſuppoſe a creature might have exiſted by the will of God from eternity; yet, as ſome think, it could not be ſaid abſolutely, and in its own nature to be eternal; becauſe eternity was not of the eſſence of it: the creature could not be its own duration, for though it were from eternity, it might not have been from eternity, becauſe its exiſtence depended upon the free will of God, who might have choſe whether he would have created it or no.

God only is eternal, the firſt and the laſt, the beginning

beginning and the end; who, as he ſubſiſted before any creature had a being, ſo he will eternally ſubſiſt if all creatures were reduced to nothing.

Fourth. Uſe.

1. Information. If God be of an eternal duration, then Chriſt is God: eternity is the property of God, but it is aſcribed to Chriſt; *he is before all things, i. e.* all created things: he is therefore no creature; and if no creature, eternal. *All things were created by him,* both in heaven and in earth, angels as well as men, whether they be thrones or dominions: if all things were his creatures, then he is no creature; if he were, all things were not created by him, or he muſt create himſelf.

He hath no difference of time; *for he is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever*; the ſame with the name of God, *I am,* which ſignifies his eternity; he is no more to-day than he was yeſterday, nor will be any other to-morrow than he is to-day; and therefore Melchiſedeck, whoſe deſcent, birth and death, father and mother, beginning and end of days, are not upon record, was a type of the exiſtence of Chriſt without difference of time: *Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like the Son of God.* The ſuppreſſion of his birth and death, was intended by the Holy Ghoſt as a type of the excellency of Chriſt's perſon in regard of his eternity, and the duration of his charge in regard of his prieſthood. As there was an appearance of an eternity in the ſuppreſſion of the race of Melchiſedeck, ſo there is a true eternity in the Son of God. How could the eternity of the Son of God be expreſt by any reſemblance ſo well, as by ſuch a ſuppreſſion of the beginning and end of this great perſon, different from the cuſtom of the Spirit of God in the Old Teſtament, who often records the generations and ends of holy men; and why might not this, which was a kind of a ſhadow of eternity, be a repreſentation of the true eternity of Chriſt, as well

well as the reſtoration of Iſaac to his father without death, is ſaid to be a figure of the reſurrection of Chriſt after a real death? Melchiſedeck is only mentioned once (without any record of his extraction) in his appearance to Abraham after his victory, as if he came from heaven only for that action, and inſtantly diſappeared again, as if he had been an eternal perſon.

Chriſt himſelf hints his own eternity—*I came forth from the Father and am come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father:* he goes to the Father as he came from the Father; he goes to the Father for everlaſting, ſo he came from the Father from everlaſting; there is the ſame duration in coming forth from the Father, as in returning to the Father; but more plainly, he ſpeaks of a glory that he *had with the Father before the world was,* when there was no creature in being; this is an actual glory, and not only in decree: for a decreed glory believers had, and why may not every one of them ſay the ſame words, *Father, glorify me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was,* if it were only a glory in decree? Nay, it may be ſaid of every man, he was before the world was, becauſe he was ſo in decree. Chriſt ſpeaks of ſomething peculiar to him, a glory in actual poſſeſſion before the world was; glorify me, embrace, honour me as thy Son, whereas I have now been in the eyes of the world handled diſgracefully as a ſervant: if it were only in decree, why is not the like expreſſion uſed of others in ſcripture as well as of Chriſt? Why did he not uſe the ſame words for his diſciples that were then with him, who had a glory in decree? His eternity is alſo mentioned in the Old Teſtament, *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.* If he were the work of God, he exiſted before himſelf, if he exiſted before all the works of God; it is not ſo properly meant of the eſſential wiſdom of God, ſince the

the diſcourſe runs in the name of a perſon; and ſeveral paſſages there are which belong not ſo much to the eſſential wiſdom of God, as ver. 13, *The evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate*; which belongs rather to the holineſs of God than to the eſſential wiſdom of God; beſides it is diſtinguiſhed from Jehovah, as poſſeſſed by him, *and rejoicing before him.* Yet plainer, *Out of thee*, i. e. *Bethlehem ſhall be come forth to be ruler in Iſrael, whoſe goings forth have been from of old, from everlaſting*, from the ways of eternity. There are two goings forth of Chriſt deſcribed, one from Bethlehem in the days of his incarnation, and another from eternity. The Holy Ghoſt adds after his prediction of his incarnation, his going out from everlaſting, that none ſhould doubt of his deity: If this going out from everlaſting, were only in the purpoſe of God, it might be ſaid of David, and of every creature: and in Iſa. ix. 6. he is particularly called the everlaſting, or eternal Father; not the father in the trinity, but a father to us; yet eternal, the father of eternity. As he is the mighty God, ſo he is the everlaſting father: can ſuch a title be aſcribed to any, whoſe being depends upon the will of another, and may be daſhed out at the pleaſure of a ſuperior?

As the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, ſo the eternity of Chriſt is the ground of the chriſtian religion: could our ſins be perfectly expiated, had he not an eternal divinity to anſwer for the offences committed againſt an eternal God? temporary ſufferings had been of little validity, without an infiniteneſs and eternity in his perſon to add weight to his paſſion.

2. If God be eternal, he knows all things as preſent. All things are preſent to him in his eternity; for this is the notion of eternity, to be without ſucceſſion. If eternity be one indiviſible point, and is not diffuſed into preceding and ſucceeding parts, then that which is known in it or by it, is perceived without

without any ſucceſſion; for knowledge is as the ſubſtance of the perſon knowing; if that hath various actions and diſtinct from itſelf, then it underſtands things in differences of time as time preſents them to view: but ſince God's being depends not upon the revolutions of time, ſo neither doth his knowledge; it exceeds all motions of years and days, comprehends infinite ſpaces of paſt and future. God conſiders all things in his eternity in one ſimple knowledge, as if they were now acted before him: *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world--à ſeculo*; from eternity. God's knowledge is co-eternal with him: if he knows that in time which he did not know from eternity, he would not be eternally perfect, ſince knowledge is the perfection of an intelligent nature.

3. How bold and fooliſh is it for a mortal creature to cenſure the counſels and actions of an eternal God, or be too curious in his inquiſitions? It is by the conſideration of the unſearchable number of the years of God, that Elihu checks too bold enquiries: *Who hath enjoined him his way, or who can ſay, thou haſt wrought iniquity? Behold God is great and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be ſearched out.* Eternity ſets God above our enquiries and cenſures. Infants of a day old are not able to underſtand the acts of wiſe and grey heads; ſhall we, that are of ſo ſhort a being and underſtanding as yeſterday, preſume to meaſure the motions of eternity by our ſcanty intellects? We that cannot foreſee an unexpected accident which falls in to blaſt a well-laid deſign, and run a ſhip many leagues back from the intended harbour; we cannot underſtand the reaſon of things we ſee done in time, the motions of the ſea, the generation of rain, the nature of light, the ſympathies and antipathies of the creatures; and ſhall we dare to cenſure the actions of an eternal God ſo infinitely beyond our reach? The counſels

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of a boundleſs being are not to be ſcanned by the brain of a ſilly worm, that hath breathed but a few minutes in the world: ſince eternity cannot be comprehended in time, it is not to be judged by a creature of time, let us remember to magnify his works which we behold, becauſe he is eternal, which is the exhortation of Elihu, backed by this doctrine of God's eternity; and not accuſe any work of him who is the Ancient of Days, or preſume to direct him, of whoſe eternity we come infinitely ſhort: whenever therefore, an unworthy notion of the counſels and works of God is ſuggeſted to us by ſatan, or our own corrupt hearts; let us look backward to God's eternal and our own ſhort duration, and ſilence ourſelves with the ſame queſtion whereby God put a ſtop to the reaſoning of Job: *Where waſt thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth?* and reprove ourſelves for our curioſity; ſince we are of ſo ſhort a ſtanding, and were nothing when the eternal God laid the firſt ſtone of the world.

4. What a folly and boldneſs is there in ſin, ſince an eternal God is offended thereby? All ſin is aggravated by God's eternity: the blackneſs of the heathen idolatry was, in changing the glory of the incorruptible God, erecting reſemblances of of him contrary to his immortal nature; as if the eternal God, whoſe life is as unlimited as eternity, were like thoſe creatures whoſe beings are meaſured by the ſhort ell of time, which are of a corruptible nature, and daily paſſing on to corruption: they could not really deprive God of his glory and immortality, but they did in eſtimation. There is in the nature of every ſin a tendency to reduce God to a not being. He that thinks unworthily of God, or acts unworthily towards him, doth (as much as in him lies) ſully and deſtroy theſe two perfections of his, immutability and eternity: it is a carriage, as if he were as contemptible as

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a creature that were but of yeſterday, and ſhall not remain in being to-morrow. He that would put an end to God's glory by darkening it, would put an end to God's life by deſtroying it. He that ſhould love a beaſt with as great an affection as he loves a man, contemns a rational nature; and he that loves a periſhing thing with the ſame affection he ſhould love an everlaſting God, contemns his eternity; he debaſeth the duration of God below that of the world: the low valuation of God ſpeaks him, in his eſteem, no better than withering graſs, or a gourd, which laſts for a night; and the creature which poſſeſſes his affection, to be a good that laſts for ever. How fooliſh then is every ſin, that tends to deſtroy a being that cannot deſtroy or deſert himſelf; a being, without whoſe eternity the ſinner himſelf could not have had the capacity of a being to affront him? how baſe is that which would not let the works of God remain in their eſtabliſhed poſture? how much more baſe in not enduring the fountain and glory of all beings, that would not only put an end to the beauty of the world, but the eternity of God?

5. How dreadful is it to lie under the ſtroke of an eternal God? his eternity is as great a terror to him that hates him, as it is a comfort to him that loves him; becauſe he is the *living God, an everlaſting King, the nations ſhall not be able to abide his indignation.* Though God be leaſt in their thoughts, and is made light of in the world; yet the thoughts of God's eternity, when he comes to judge the world, ſhall make the ſlighters of him tremble: that the judge and puniſher lives for ever, is the greateſt grievance to a ſoul in miſery, and adds an inconceivable weight to it, above what the infiniteneſs of God's executive power could do without that duration: his eternity makes the puniſhment more dreadful than his power; his power makes it ſharp, but his eternity renders it perpetual;

perpetual; ever to endure, is the ſting at the end of every laſh.

And how ſad is it, to think that God lays his eternity to pawn for the puniſhment of obſtinate ſinners, and engageth it by a oath, that he will *wet his glittering ſword*, that his *hand ſhall take hold of judgment*, that he will *render vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him*; a reward proportioned to the greatneſs of their offences, and the glory of an eternal God? *I lift up my hand to heaven, and ſay, I live for ever, i. e.* as ſurely as I live for ever, I will wet my glittering ſword. As none can convey good with a perpetuity, ſo none can convey evil with ſuch a laſtingneſs as God. It is a great loſs to loſe a ſhip richly fraught in the bottom of the ſea, never to be caſt upon the ſhore; but how much greater is it, to loſe eternally a ſovereign God; which we were capable of eternally enjoying, and undergo an evil as durable as that God we ſlighted, and were in a poſſibility of avoiding? The miſeries of men after this life are not eaſed, but ſharpened by the life and eternity of God.

The ſecond uſe is of comfort. What foundation of comfort can we have in any of God's attributes, were it not for his infiniteneſs and eternity; though he be merciful, good, wiſe, faithful? What ſupport could there be, if they were perfections belonging to a corruptible God? What hopes of a reſurrection to happineſs can we have, or of the duration of it; if that God who promiſed it were not immortal to continue it, as well as powerful to effect it? his power were not almighty, if his duration were not eternal.

1. If God be eternal, his covenant will be ſo. It is founded upon the eternity of God; the oath whereby he confirms it, is by his life: ſince there is none greater than himſelf, he ſwears by himſelf, or by his own life, which he engageth together

with his eternity for the full performance; ſo that if he lives for ever, the covenant ſhall not be diſannulled, it is an immutable counſel: the immutability of his counſel follows the immutability of his nature. Immutability and eternity go hand in hand together. The promiſe of eternal life is as ancient as God himſelf in regard of the purpoſe of the promiſe, or in regard of the promiſe made to Chriſt for us. *Eternal life which God promiſed before the world began.* As it hath an anti-eternity, ſo it hath a poſt-eternity; therefore the goſpel, which is the new covenant publiſhed, is termed the *everlaſting goſpel*; which can no more be altered and periſh, than God can change and vaniſh into nothing: he can as little morally deny his truth, as he can naturally deſert his life. The covenant is there repreſented in a green colour, to note its perpetual verdure: the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant, about the throne, was like to an emerald, a ſtone of a green colour; whereas the natural rainbow hath many colours; this but one, to ſignify its eternity.

2. If God be eternal, he being our God in covenant, is an eternal good and poſſeſſion. This God is God for ever and ever; *He is a dwelling place in all generations.* We ſhall traverſe the world a while, and then arrive at the bleſſings Jacob wiſhed for Joſeph; *The bleſſings of the everlaſting hills.* If an eſtate of a thouſand pounds per annum render a man's life comfortable for a ſhort term, how much more may the ſoul be ſwallowed up with joy in the enjoyment of the creator, whoſe years never fail, who lives for ever to be enjoyed, and can keep us in life for ever to enjoy him? Death indeed will ſeize upon us by God's irreverſible order, but the immortal creator will make him diſgorge his morſel, and land us in a glorious immortality; our ſouls at their diſſolution, and our bodies at the reſurrection, after which they ſhall remain for ever, and

and employ the extent of that boundleſs eternity in the fruition of the ſovereign and eternal God: for it is impoſſible that the believer, who is united to the immortal God that is from everlaſting to everlaſting, can ever periſh; for being in conjunction with him who is an ever-flowing fountain of life, he cannot ſuffer him to remain in the jaws of death. While God is eternal, and always the ſame; it is not poſſible that thoſe that partake of his ſpiritual life, ſhould not alſo partake of his eternal. It is from the conſideration of the endleſſneſs of the years of God that the church comforts herſelf, that *her children ſhall continue, and their ſeed be eſtabliſhed for ever.* And from the eternity of God, Habakkuk, chap. i. 12. concludes the eternity of believers, *Art not thou from everlaſting, O Lord my God, my holy one? We ſhall not die, O Lord.* After they are retired from this world, they ſhall live for ever with God without any change by the multitude of thoſe imaginable years and ages that ſhall run for ever. It is that God who hath neither beginning nor end, that is our God; who hath not only immortality in himſelf, but immortality to give out to others. As he hath abundance of ſpirit to quicken them, ſo he hath abundance of immortality to continue them. It is only in the conſideration of this a man can with wiſdom ſay, ſoul take thy eaſe, thou haſt goods laid up for many years; to ſay it of any other poſſeſſion, is the greateſt folly in the judgment of our Saviour. Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of immortality: rivers of pleaſure ſhall be for evermore. Death is a word never ſpoken there by any, never heard by any in that poſſeſſion of eternity; it is for ever put out as one of Chriſt's conquered enemies.

The happineſs depends upon the preſence of God, with whom believers ſhall be for ever preſent. Happineſs cannot periſh as long as God lives: he is the firſt and the laſt; the firſt of all delights,

nothing before him; the laſt of all pleaſures, nothing beyond them: a paradiſe of delights in every point without a flaming ſword.

2. The enjoyment of God will be as freſh and glorious after many ages, as it was at firſt. God is eternal, and eternity knows no change; there will then be the fulleſt poſſeſſion without any decay in the object enjoyed. There can be nothing paſt. nothing future; time neither adds to it nor detracts from it; that infinite fulneſs of perfection which flouriſheth in him now, will flouriſh eternally, without any diſcolouring of it in the leaſt by thoſe innumerable ages that ſhall run to eternity, much leſs any deſpoiling him of them. He is the ſame in his endleſs duration. As God is, ſo will the eternity of him be, without ſucceſſion, without diviſion: the fulneſs of joy will be always preſent; without paſt to be thought of with regret for being gone; without future to be expected with tormenting deſires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux; an entire poſſeſſion of all together, without the paſſing away of pleaſures that may be wiſhed to return, or expectation of future joys which might be deſired to haſten. Time is fluid, but eternity is ſtable, and after many ages the joys will be as ſavory and ſatisfying as if they had been but that moment firſt taſted by our hungry appetites. When the glory of the Lord ſhall riſe upon you, it ſhall be ſo far from ever ſetting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the ſands on the ſea ſhore, the Sun, in the light of whoſe countenance you ſhall live, ſhall be as bright as at the firſt appearance: he will be ſo far from ceaſing to flow, that he will flow as ſtrong and as full as at the firſt communication of himſelf in glory to the creature. God therefore as ſitting upon his throne of grace, and acting according to his covenant, is like a jaſper-ſtone, which is of a green colour, a colour always delightful; becauſe

God

God is always vigorous, and flouriſhing; a pure act of life, ſparkling new and freſh rays of life and light to the creature, flouriſhing with a perpetual ſpring, and contenting the moſt capacious deſire; forming your intereſt, pleaſure and ſatisfaction, with an infinite variety, without any change or ſucceſſion: he will have variety to increaſe delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite, an eternal God: he is not a ciſtern but a fountain, wherein water is always living and never putrifies.

4. If God be eternal, here is a ſtrong ground of comfort againſt all the diſtreſſes of the church, and the threats of the church's enemies. God's abiding for ever, is the plea Jeremy makes for his return to his forſaken church. *Thou, O Lord, remaineſt for ever, thy throne from generation to generation.* The church is weak; created things are eaſily cut off; what prop is there, but that God that lives for ever? what though Jeruſalem loſt its bulwarks, the temple were defaced, the land waſted; yet the God of Jeruſalem ſits upon an eternal throne, and from everlaſting to everlaſting there is no diminution of his power. The prophet intimates in this complaint, that it is not agreeable to God's eternity to forget his people, to whom he hath from eternity bore good will. In the greateſt confuſions, the church's eyes are to be fixed upon the eternity of God's throne, where he ſits as govenor of the world: no creature can take any comfort in this perfection, but the church; other creatures depend upon God, but the church is united to him.

The firſt diſcovery of the name, I Am, which ſignifies the divine eternity as well as immutability, was for the comfort of the oppreſt Iſraelites in Egypt; it was then publiſhed from the ſecret place of the Almighty, as the only ſtrong cordial to refreſh them: it hath not yet, it ſhall not ever loſe

its virtue in any of the miſeries that have, or ſhall ſucceſſively befal the church. It is a comfort as durable as the God whoſe name it is: he is ſtill, I Am, and the ſame to the church, as he was then to his Iſrael. His ſpiritual Iſrael have a greater right to the glories of it, than the carnal Iſrael could have: no oppreſſion can be greater than theirs; what was a comfort ſuited to that diſtreſs, hath the ſame ſuitableneſs to every other oppreſſion. It was not a temporary name but a name for ever; his memorial to all generations, and reacheth to the church of the Gentiles, with whom he treats as the God of Abraham, ratifying that covenant by the Meſſiah, which he made with Abraham the father of the faithful.

The church's enemies are not to be feared; they may ſpring as the graſs, but ſoon after do wither by their own inward principles of decay, or are cut down by the hand of God. They may be inſtruments of the anger of God, but *they ſhall be ſcattered as the workers of iniquity by the hand of the Lord, that is high for evermore*, and is engaged by his promiſe, to preſerve a church in the world. They may threaten, but their breath may vaniſh, as ſoon as their threatnings are pronounced: for they carry their breath in no ſurer a place than their own noſtrils, upon which the eternal God can put his hand, and ſink them with all their rage. Do the prophets and inſtructors of the church, live for ever?—No. Shall then the adverſaries and diſturbers of the church live for ever?—they ſhall vaniſh as a ſhadow, their being depends upon the eternal God of the faithful, and the everlaſting judge of the wicked. He that inhabits eternity, is above them that inhabit mortality, and muſt, whether they will or no, *ſay to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my ſiſter.* When they will act with a confidence, as if they were living gods, he

he will not be mated, but evidence himſelf to be a living God above them. Why then ſhould mortal men be feared in their frowns, when an immortal God hath promiſed protection in his word, and lives for ever to perform it?

5. Hence follows another comfort; ſince God is eternal, he hath as much power as will, to be as good as his word; his promiſes are eſtabliſhed upon his eternity, and this perfection, is a main ground of truſt; *Truſt in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord* Jehovah *is everlasting ſtrength*—his name is doubled, that name, *Iah*, and *Jehovah*, which was always the ſtrength of his people; and not a ſingle one, but the ſtrength or rock of eternities; not a failing but an eternal truth and power; that as his ſtrength is eternal, ſo our truſt in him ſhould intimate his eternity in its perpetuity; and therefore in the deſpondency of his people, as if God had forgot his promiſes, and made no account of them, or his word, and were weary of doing good, he calls them to reflect on what they had heard of his eternity, which is attended with immutability, who hath an infiniteneſs of power to perform his will, and an infiniteneſs of underſtanding to judge of the right ſeaſons of it. His wiſdom, will, truth, have always been, and will to eternity be the ſame. He wants not life, any more then love, for ever to help us; ſince his word is paſt, he will never fail us; ſince his life continues, he can never be out of a capacity to relieve us: and therefore when ever we fooliſhly charge him by our diſtruſtful thoughts, we forget his love, which made the promiſe, and his eternal life, which can accompliſh it. As his word is the bottom of our truſt, and his truth is the aſſurance of his ſincerity, ſo his eternity is the aſſurance of his ability to perform. His word ſtands for ever. A man may be my friend this day, and be in another world to-morrow; and though he be never ſo ſincere in his word, yet death ſnaps his life aſunder, and forbids the

execution. But as God cannot die, ſo he cannot lie, becauſe he is the eternity of Iſrael. *The ſtrength of Iſrael will not lie, nor repent.* Eternity implies immutability; we could have no ground for our hopes, if we knew him not to be longer lived than ourſelves. The pſalmiſt beats off our hands from truſt in men, becauſe their breath goes forth, they return to their earth, and in that day their thoughts periſh. And if the God of Jacob were like them, what happineſs could we have in making him our help? As his ſovereignty in giving precepts had not been a ſtrong ground of obedience, without conſidering him as an eternal law-giver, who could maintain his rights; ſo his kindneſs in making the promiſes, had not been a ſtrong ground of confidence, without conſidering him as an eternal promiſer, whoſe thoughts, and whoſe life can never periſh: and this may be one reaſon, why the Holy Ghoſt mentions ſo often the poſt-eternity of God, and ſo little his anti-eternity: becauſe that is the ſtrongeſt foundation of our faith, and hope, which reſpects chiefly, that which is future, and not that which is paſt; yet indeed no aſſurance of his after eternity can be had, if his anti-eternity be not certain. If he had a beginning, he may have an end; and if he had a change in his nature, he might have in his counſels; but ſince all the reſolves of God are as himſelf is, eternal, and all the promiſes of God are the fruits of his counſel, therefore they cannot be changed: if he ſhould change them for the better, he would not have been eternally wiſe, to know what was beſt; if for the worſe, he had not been eternally good or juſt. Men may break their promiſes, becauſe they are made without foreſight; but God that inhabits eternity, foreknows all things, that ſhall be done under the ſun, as if they had been then acting before him; and nothing can intervene, or work a change in his reſolves; becauſe the leaſt circumſtances were eternally foreſeen by him.

The Immutability of God.

Pſalm cii. 26, 27.

THEY SHALL PERISH, BUT THOU SHALT ENDURE; YEA, ALL OF THEM SHALL WAX OLD AS A GARMENT; AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU CHANGE THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE CHANGED: BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL HAVE NO END.

THIS pſalm contains a complaint of a people preſſed with a great calamity; ſome think of the Jewiſh church in Babylon; others think the pſalmiſt doth here perſonate mankind lying under a ſtate of corruption: becauſe he wiſhes for the coming of the Meſſiah to accompliſh that redemption promiſed by God and needed by them. Indeed the title of the pſalm is "A prayer of the afflicted, "when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his com-"plaint before the Lord:" Whether afflicted with the ſenſe of corruption, or with the ſenſe of oppreſſion. And the redemption by the Meſſiah, which the ancient church looked upon as the fountain of their deliverance from a ſinful or a ſervile bondage, is in this pſalm ſpoken of: a ſet time appointed for the diſcovery of his mercy to Sion, ver. 13. An appearance in glory to build up Sion, ver. 16. The looſing of the priſoner by redemption, and them that are appointed to death, ver. 20. The calling of the Gentiles, ver. 22. And the latter part of the Pſalm, wherein are the verſes I have read, are applied to Chriſt, Heb. i. Whatſoever the deſign of the

the pſalm might be, many things are intermingled that concern the kingdom of the Meſſiah, and redemption by Chriſt.

Thou art the ſame. The eſſence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the ſame, without any variation from eternity to eternity: ſo that the text doth not only aſſert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration: his eternity is ſignified in that expreſſion, *thou ſhalt endure*; his immutability in this, *thou art the ſame.* To endure, argues indeed his immutability as well as eternity; for what endures, is not changed, and what is changed, doth not endure: but thou art the ſame doth more fully ſignify it: he could not be the ſame if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is; the pſalmiſt therefore puts, not thou haſt been or ſhalt be, but thou art the ſame without any alteration; thou art the ſame, that is, the ſame God, the ſame in eſſence and nature, the ſame in will and purpoſe: thou doſt change all other things as thou pleaſeſt; but thou art immutable in every reſpect, and receiveſt no ſhadow of change, though never ſo light and ſmall. The pſalmiſt here alludes to the name Jehovah, I Am; and doth not only aſcribe immutability to God, but exclude every thing elſe from partaking in that perfection: all things elſe are tottering; God ſees all other things in continual motion under his feet, like water paſſing away and no more ſeen, while he remains fixed and immoveable: his wiſdom and power, his knowledge and will, are always the ſame. His eſſence can receive no alteration, neither by itſelf nor by any external cauſe; whereas other things either naturally decline to deſtruction, paſs from one term to another till they come to their period; or ſhall at the laſt day be wrapped up, after God has compleated his will in them and by them; as a man doth a garment he intends to repair and transform to another uſe.

Let

Let us ſee then,

1. In what regards God is immutable.

2. Prove that God is immutable.

3. That this is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature.

4. Some propoſitions to clear the unchangeableneſs of God from any thing that ſeems contrary to it.

5. The uſe.

Firſt, in what reſpects God is unchangeable.—God is unchangeable in his eſſence. He is unalterably fixed in his being, that not a particle of it can be loſt from it, not a mite added to it. If a man continue in being as long as Methuſelah, nine hundred and ſixty nine years, yet there is not a day, nay an hour, wherein there is not ſome alteration in his ſubſtance; though no ſubſtantial part is wanting, yet there is an addition to him by his food, a diminution of ſomething by his labour; he is always making ſome acquiſition, or ſuffering ſome loſs: but in God there can be no alteration, by the acceſſion of any thing to make his ſubſtance greater or better, or by diminution to make it leſs or worſe. He who hath no being from another cannot but be always what he is: God is the firſt being, an independent being; he was not produced of himſelf, or of any other, but by nature always hath been; and therefore cannot by himſelf, or by any other be changed from what he is in his own nature. That which is not, may as well aſſume to itſelf a being, as he who hath and is all being, have the leaſt change from what he is. Again, becauſe he is a ſpirit, he is not ſubject to thoſe mutations which are found incorporeal and bodily natures; becauſe he is an abſolute ſimple ſpirit, not having the leaſt particle of compoſition; he is not capable of thoſe changes which may be in created ſpirits.

If his eſſence were mutable. God would not truly be; it could not be truly ſaid by himſelf, *I*

am

am that I am, if he were ſuch a thing or being at this time, and a different being at another time. Whatſoever is changed, properly is not, becauſe it doth not remain to be what it was: that which is changed was ſomething, is ſomething, and will be ſomething; a being remains to that thing which is changed; yet though it may be ſaid ſuch a thing is, it may be alſo ſaid ſuch a thing is not, becauſe it is not what it was in its firſt being; it is not now what it was, it is now what it was not; it is another thing than it was, it was another thing than it is; it will be another thing than what it is or was: it is indeed a being, but a different being from what it was before. But if God were changed, it could not be ſaid of him that he is, but it might alſo be ſaid of him that he is not; or if he were changeable or could be changed, it might be ſaid of him he is, but he will not be what he is; or he may not be what he is, but there will be or may be ſome difference in his being, and ſo God would not be *I am that I am*; for though he would not ceaſe utterly to be, yet he would ceaſe to be what he was before.

Again, if his eſſence were mutable, he could not be perfectly bleſſed, and fully rejoice in himſelf. If he changed for the better, he could not have an infinite pleaſure in what he was before the change, becauſe he was not infinitely bleſſed; and the pleaſure of that ſtate could not be of a higher kind than the ſtate itſelf, or at leaſt the apprehenſion of a happineſs in it: if he changed for the worſe, he could not have a pleaſure in it after the change; for according to the diminution of his ſtate, would be the decreaſe of his pleaſure: his pleaſure could not be infinite before the change, if he changed for the better; it could not be infinite after the change, if he changed for the worſe: if he changed for the better, he would not have had an infinite goodneſs of being before, and not having an infinite goodneſs

of

of being, he would have a finite goodneſs of being; for there is no medium between finite and infinite; then though the change were for the better, yet being finite before, ſomething would be ſtill wanting to make him infinitely bleſſed; becauſe being finite, he could not change to that which is infinite; for finite and infinite are extremes ſo diſtant, that they can never paſs into one another; that is, that which is finite ſhould become infinite, or that which is infinite ſhould become finite: ſo that ſuppoſing him mutable, his eſſence in no ſtate of change, could furniſh him with an infinite peace and bleſſedneſs.

Again, if God's eſſence be changed, he either increaſeth or diminiſheth: whatſoever is changed, doth either gain by receiving ſome thing larger and greater than it had in itſelf before, or gains nothing by being changed. If the former, then it receives more than itſelf, more than it had in itſelf before. The divine nature cannot be increaſed; for whatſoever receives any thing than what it had in itſelf before, muſt neceſſarily receive it from another, becauſe nothing can give to itſelf that which it hath not: but God cannot receive from another what he hath not already, becauſe whatſoever other things poſſeſs, is derived from him, and therefore contained in him, as the fountain contains the virtue in itſelf which it conveys to the ſtreams; ſo that God cannot gain any thing: if a thing that is changed gain nothing by that change, it loſeth ſomething of what it had before in itſelf; and this loſs muſt be by itſelf or ſome other. God cannot receive any loſs from any thing in himſelf; he cannot will his own diminution; that is repugnant to every nature: he may as well will his own deſtruction as his own decreaſe; every decreaſe is a partial deſtruction: but it is impoſſible for God to die any kind of death, to have any reſemblance of death, for he is immortal, and only hath immortality, therefore impoſſible

impoſſible to be diminiſhed in any particle of his eſſence; nor can he be diminiſhed by any thing in his own nature, becauſe his infinite ſimplicity admits of nothing diſtinct from himſelf, or contrary to himſelf. All decreaſes come from ſomething contrary to the nature of that thing which doth decreaſe: whatſoever is made leſs than itſelf, was not truly *unum*, one and ſimple, becauſe that which divides itſelf in ſeparation was not the ſame in conjunction. Nor can he be diminiſhed by any other without himſelf; becauſe nothing is ſuperior to God, nothing ſtronger than God which can oppreſs him: but whatſoever is changed, is weaker than that which changeth it, and ſinks under a power it cannot ſucceſsfully reſiſt; weakneſs belongs not to the deity. Nor laſtly, can God change from a ſtate wherein he is, to another ſtate equal to the former, as men in ſome caſes may do; for in paſſing from one ſtate to another equal to it, ſomething muſt be parted with which he had before, that ſome other thing may accrue to him as a recompenſe for that loſs, to make him equal to what he was: this recompence then he had not before, though he had ſomething equal to it: and in this caſe, it could not be ſaid by God, *I am that I am*, but I am equal to what I was; for in this caſe, there would be a diminution and increaſe, which (as was ſhewed) cannot be in God.

Again, God is of himſelf, from no other. Natures, which are made by God, may increaſe, becauſe they began to be; they may decreaſe, becauſe they were made of nothing, and ſo tend to nothing; the condition of their original leads them to defect, and the power of their Creator brings them to increaſe. But God hath no original, he hath no defect, becauſe he was not made of nothing; he hath no increaſe, becauſe he hath no beginning: he was before all things, and therefore depends upon no other thing which by its own change can bring

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any change upon him. That which is from itſelf cannot be changed, becauſe it hath nothing before it, nothing more excellent than itſelf: but that which is from another, as its firſt cauſe and chief good, may be changed by that which was its efficient cauſe and laſt end.

God is immutable in regard of knowledge. God hath known from all eternity all that which he can know, ſo that nothing is hid from him; he knows not at preſent any more than he hath known from eternity, and that which he knows now, he always knows: *All things are open and naked before him*, Heb. iv. 13. A man is ſaid to be changed in regard of knowledge, when he knows that now which he did not know before, or knows that to be falſe now which he thought true before, or hath ſomething for the object of his underſtanding now, which he had not before.

But this would be repugnant to the wiſdom and omniſcience which belongs to the notion of a deity. That cannot be God that is not infinitely wiſe; that cannot be infinitely wiſe, that is either ignorant of, or miſtaken in his apprehenſion of any one thing. If God be changed in knowledge, it muſt be for want of wiſdom; all change of this nature in creatures, implies this defect preceding or accompanying it: ſuch a thought of God, would have been unworthy of him that is only wiſe; that hath no mate for wiſdom; none wiſe beſides himſelf. If he knew that thing this day which he knew not before, he would not be an only wiſe being; for a being that did know every thing at once, might be conceived, and ſo a wiſer being be apprehended by the mind of man. If God underſtood a thing at one time, which he did not at another, he would be changed from ignorance to knowledge; as if he could not do that this day which he could do to-morrow, he would be changed from impotence to power: he could not be always omniſcient, becauſe there

there might be yet ſomething ſtill to come which he yet knows not, though he may know all things that are paſt. What way ſoever you ſuppoſe a change, you muſt ſuppoſe a preſent or a paſt ignorance; if he be changed in his knowledge for the perfection of his underſtanding, he was ignorant before; if his underſtanding be impaired by the change, he is ignorant after it.

If God was changeable in his knowledge, it would make him unfit to be an object of truſt to any rational creature. His revelations would want the due ground for entertainment, if his underſtanding were changeable; for that might be revealed as truth now, which might prove falſe hereafter, and that as falſe now, which hereafter might prove true; and ſo God would be an unfit object of obedience in regard of his precepts, and an unfit object of confidence in regard of his promiſes: for if he be changeable in knowledge, he is defective in knowledge, and might promiſe that now, which he would know afterwards was unfit to be promiſed, and therefore unfit to be performed: it would make him an incompetent object of dread, in regard of his threatenings; for he might threaten that now, which he might know hereafter was not fit or juſt to be inflicted. A changeable mind and underſtanding cannot make a due and right judgment of things to be done, and things to be avoided. No wiſe man would judge it reaſonable to truſt a weak and flitting perſon.

God muſt needs be unchangeable in his knowledge: but, as the ſchoolmen ſay, that as the ſun always ſhines, ſo God always knows; as the ſun never ceaſeth to ſhine, ſo God never ceaſeth to know: nothing can be hid from the vaſt compaſs of his underſtanding, no more than any thing can ſhelter itſelf without the verge of his power.

This farther appears in that God knows by his own eſſence. He doth not know as we do, by habits,

habits, qualities, ſpecies, whereby we may be miſtaken at one time and rectified at another: he hath not an underſtanding diſtinct from his eſſence, as we have; but being the moſt ſimple being, his underſtanding is his eſſence; and as from the infiniteneſs of his eſſence we conclude the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding, ſo from the unchangeableneſs of his eſſence, we may juſtly conclude the unchangeableneſs of his knowledge: ſince God is without all compoſition, and his underſtanding is not diſtinct from his eſſence, what he knows, he knows by his eſſence; and there can be no more mutability in his knowledge, than in his eſſence; if there were any in that, he could not be God, becauſe he would have the property of a creature: if his underſtanding then be his eſſence, his knowledge is as neceſſary, as unchangeable, as his eſſence: as his eſſence eminently contains all perfections in itſelf, ſo his underſtanding comprehends all things paſt, preſent, and future, in itſelf: if his underſtanding and his eſſence were not one and the ſame, he were not ſimple but compounded; if compounded, he would conſiſt of parts; if he conſiſted of parts, he would not be an independent being, and ſo would not be God.

God knows all things by one intuitive act. As there is no ſucceſſion in his being, ſo that he is one thing now and another thing hereafter; ſo there is no ſucceſſion in his knowledge: he knows things that are ſucceſſive, before their exiſtence and ſucceſſion, by one ſingle act of intuition; by one caſt of his eye all things future are preſent to him in regard of his eternity and omnipreſence: ſo that though there is a change and variation in the things known, yet his knowledge of them, and their ſeveral changes in nature, is invariable and unalterable. As imagine a creature that could ſee with his eye at one glance the whole compaſs of the heavens, by ſending out beams from his eye without receiving any ſpecies from them, he would ſee the whole heavens uniformly; this part now in the

eaſt, then in the weſt, without any change in his eye: for he ſees every part and every motion together; and though that great body varies and whirls about, and is in continual agitation, his eye remains ſtedfaſt, ſuffers no change, beholds all their motions at once and by one glance. God knows all things from eternity, and therefore perpetually knows them; the reaſon is becauſe the divine knowledge is infinite, and therefore comprehends all knowable truths at once. An eternal knowledge comprehends in itſelf all time, and beholds paſt and preſent in the ſame manner, and therefore his knowledge is immutable: by one ſimple knowledge he conſiders the infinite ſpaces of paſt and future.

God's knowledge and will is the cauſe of all things and their ſucceſſions. There can be no pretence of any changeableneſs of knowledge in God, but in this caſe, before things come to paſs, he knows that they will come to paſs; after they are come to paſs, he knows that they are paſt and ſlide away. This would be ſomething if the ſucceſſion of things were the cauſe of the divine knowledge, as it is of our knowledge; but on the contrary, the divine knowledge and will is the cauſe of the ſucceſſion of them: God doth not know creatures becauſe they are, but they are becauſe he knows them. *All his works were known to him from the beginning of the world.* All his works were not known to him, if the events of all thoſe works were not alſo known to him; if they were not known to him how ſhould he make them? he could not do any thing ignorantly: he made them then after he knew them, and did not know them after he made them: his knowledge of them made a change in them; their exiſtence made no change in his knowledge: he knew them when they were to be created, in the ſame manner that he knew them after they were created; before they were brought into

into act, as well as after they were brought into act; before they were made, they were, and were not; they were in the knowledge of God, when they were not in their own nature: God did not receive his knowledge from their exiſtence, but his knowledge and will acted upon them to bring them into being.

Therefore the diſtinction of paſt and future makes no change in the knowledge of God. When a thing is paſt, God hath no more diſtinct knowledge of it after it is paſt, than he had when it was to come; all things were all in their circumſtances of paſt, preſent and to come, ſeen by his underſtanding, as they were determined by his will. Beſides, to know a day to be paſt or future, is only to know the ſtate of that day in itſelf, and to know its relation, to that which follows and that which went before: this day wherein we are, if we conſider it in the ſtate wherein it was yeſterday, it was to come, it was future; but if we conſider it in that ſtate wherein it will be to-morrow, we underſtand it as paſt. This in man cannot be ſaid to be a different knowledge of the thing itſelf, but only of the circumſtance attending a thing, and the different relation of it. As I ſee the ſun this day, I know it was up yeſterday, I know it will be up to-morrow; my knowledge of the ſun is the ſame; if there be any change it is in the ſun not in my knowledge, only I apply my knowledge to ſuch particular circumſtances. How much more muſt the knowledge of thoſe things in God be unchangeable, who knows all thoſe ſtates, conditions and circumſtances moſt perfectly from eternity, wherein there is no ſucceſſion, no paſt or future, and therefore will know them for ever? he always beholds the ſame thing; he ſees indeed ſucceſſion in things, and he ſees a thing to be paſt which before was future: as from eternity he ſaw Adam as exiſting in ſuch a time; in the firſt time he ſaw that he would be,

in the following time he ſaw that he had been: but this he knew from eternity, this he knew in the ſame manner; though there was a variation in Adam, yet there was no variation in God's knowledge of him in all ſtates; though Adam was not preſent to himſelf, yet in all his ſtates he was preſent to God's eternity.

Conſider, that the knowledge of God, in regard of the manner of it as well as the objects, is incomprehenſible to a finite creature. So that though we cannot arrive to a full underſtanding of the manner of God's knowledge, yet we muſt conceive ſo of it, as to remove all imperfection from him in it: and ſince it is an imperfection to be changeable, we muſt remove that from God; the knowledge of God about things paſt, preſent and future, muſt be inconceivably above ours: *His underſtanding is infinite*, Pſa. cxlvii. 5. There is no number of it; it can no more be calculated or drawn into an account by us, than infinite ſpaces which have no bounds and limits can be meaſured by us. We can no more arrive, even in heaven, to a comprehenſive underſtanding of the manner of his knowledge, than of the infinite glory of his eſſence; we may as well comprehend one as the other. This we muſt conclude, that God being not a body, doth not ſee one thing with eyes and another thing with mind, as we do; but being a ſpirit, he ſees and knows only with mind, and his mind is himſelf, and is as unchangeable as himſelf; and therefore as he is not now another thing than what he was, ſo he knows not any thing now in another manner than as he knew it from eternity: he ſees all things in the glaſs of his own eſſence; as therefore the glaſs doth not vary, ſo neither doth his viſion.

God is unchangeable in regard of his will and purpoſe. A change in purpoſe is, when a man determines to do that now which before he determined

mined not to do, or to do the contrary; when a man hates that thing which he loved, or begins to love that which he before hated: when the will is changed, a man begins to will that which he willed not before, and ceaſeth to will that which he willed before: but whatſoever God hath decreed, is immutable; whatſoever God hath promiſed, ſhall be accompliſhed; *The word that goes forth out of his mouth ſhall not return to him void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which he pleaſeth*; whatſoever *he purpoſeth, he will do*; his decrees are therefore called *mountains of braſs*; braſs, as having ſubſtance and ſolidity; mountains, as being immoveable, not only by any creature but by himſelf, becauſe they ſtand upon the baſis of infallible wiſdom, and are ſupported by uncontrolable power. From this immutability of his will publiſhed to man, there could be no releaſe from the ſeverity of the law, without ſatisfaction made by the death of a mediator, ſince it was the unalterable will of God that death ſhould be the wages of ſin; and from this immutable will it was, that the length of time from the firſt promiſe of the Redeemer to his miſſion, and the daily provocations of men altered not his purpoſe for the accompliſhment of it in the fulneſs of that time he had reſolved upon; nor did the wickedneſs of former ages hinder the addition of ſeveral promiſes as buttreſſes to the firſt.

To make this out, conſider, the will of God is the ſame with his eſſence. If God had a will diſtinct from his eſſence, he would not be the moſt ſimple being. God hath not a faculty of will diſtinct from himſelf: as his underſtanding is nothing elſe but *Deus intelligens*, God underſtanding; ſo his will is nothing elſe but *Deus volens*, God willing; being therefore the eſſence of God, though it is conſidered according to our weakneſs as a faculty, it is as his underſtanding and wiſdom, eternal and immutable, and can no more be changed than his eſſence;

the immutability of the divine counſel depends upon that of his eſſence: he is the Lord Jehovah, therefore he is true to his word, Mal. iii. 6. Iſa. xliii. 13. *Yea, before the day I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* He is the ſame, immutable in his eſſence, therefore irreſiſtible in his power.

There is a concurrence of God's will and underſtanding in every thing. As his knowledge is eternal, ſo is his purpoſe. Things created had not been known to be, had not God reſolved them to be the act of his will; the exiſtence of any thing ſuppoſeth an act of his will. Again, as God knows all things by one ſimple viſion of his underſtanding, ſo he wills all things by one act of volition; therefore the purpoſe of God in the ſcripture is not expreſt by counſels in the plural number, but counſel, ſhewing that all the purpoſes of God are not various, but as one will, branching itſelf out into many acts towards the creature; but all knit in one root, all links of one chain. Whatſoever is eternal, is immutable: as his knowledge is eternal, and therefore immutable, ſo is his will; he wills or nills nothing to be in time, but what he willed and nilled from eternity; if he willed in time that to be, that he willed not from eternity, then he would know that in time which he knew not from eternity: for God knows nothing future, but as his will orders it to be future and in time to be brought into being.

There can be no reaſon for any change in the will of God. When men change in their minds, it muſt be for want of foreſight, becauſe they could not foreſee all the rubs and bars which might ſuddenly offer themſelves; which if they had foreſeen, they would not have taken ſuch meaſures; hence men often will that which they afterwards wiſh they had not willed, when they come to underſtand it clearer, and ſee that to be injurious to them which

which they thought to be good for them; or elſe the change proceeds from a natural inſtability without any juſt cauſe, and an eaſineſs to be drawn into that which is unrighteous; or elſe it proceeds from a want of power, when men take new counſels becauſe they are invincibly hindered from executing the old. But none of thoſe can be in God.

It cannot be for want of foreſight. What can be wanting to an infinite underſtanding? How can any unknown event defeat his purpoſe; ſince nothing happens in the world but what he wills to effect, or wills to permit; and therefore all future events are preſent with him? Beſides, it doth not conſiſt with God's wiſdom to reſolve any thing, but upon the higheſt reaſon; and what is the higheſt and infinite reaſon, cannot but be unalterable in itſelf; for there can be no reaſon and wiſdom higher than the higheſt. All God's purpoſes are not bare acts of will, but acts of counſel, Eph. i. 11. *He works all things according to the counſel of his own will*; and he doth not ſay ſo much that his will, as that *his counſel ſhall ſtand*, Iſa. xlvi. 10. It ſtands becauſe it is counſel: and the immutability of a promiſe is called the *immutability of his counſel*, Heb. vi. 17, as being introduced and ſettled by the moſt perfect wiſdom, and therefore to be carried on to a full and complete execution: his purpoſe then cannot be changed for want of foreſight; for this would be a charge of weakneſs.

Nor can it proceed from a natural inſtability of his will, or an eaſineſs to be drawn to that which is unrighteous. If his will ſhould not adhere to his counſel, it is becauſe it is not fit to be followed, or becauſe it will not follow it; if not fit to be followed, it is a reflection upon his wiſdom; if it be eſtabliſhed, and he will not follow it, there is a contrariety in God, as there is in a fallen creature, will againſt wiſdom. That cannot be in God,

which he hates in a creature, *viz.* the diſorder of faculties, and being out of their due place. *The righteouſneſs of God is like a great mountain,* Pſa. xxxvi. 6. The rectitude of his nature is as immovable in itſelf, as all the great mountains in the world are by the ſtrength of man. *He is not as a man, that he ſhould repent or lye,* Num. xxiii. 19. who often changes, out of a perviſity of will, as well as want of wiſdom to foreſee, or want of ability to perform. His eternal purpoſe muſt either be righteous or unrighteous; if righteous and holy, he would become unholy by the change; if not righteous nor holy, then he was unrighteous before the change; which way ſoever it falls, it would reflect upon the righteouſneſs of God, which is a blaſphemous imagination. If God did change his purpoſe, it muſt be either for the better, then the counſel of God was bad before; or the worſe, then he was not wiſe and good before.

Nor can it be for want of ſtrength. Who hath power to control him? not all the combined devices and endeavours of men, can make the counſel of God totter, Prov. xix. 21. *There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheleſs the counſel of the Lord, that ſhall ſtand*; that, and that only ſhall ſtand: man hath a power to deviſe and imagine, but no power to effect and execute of himſelf. God wants no more power to effect what he will, than he wants underſtanding to know what is fit.

Well then, ſince God wanted not wiſdom to frame his decrees, nor holineſs to regulate them, nor power to effect them; what ſhould make him change them? ſince there can be no reaſon ſuperior to his; no event unforeſeen by him; no holineſs comparable to his; no unrighteouſneſs found in him; no power equal to his to put a rub in his way.

Though the will of God be immutable, yet it is not to be underſtood ſo, as that the things themſelves ſo willed, are immutable; nor will the immutability

mutability of the things willed by him, follow upon the unchangeableneſs of his will in willing them; though God be firm in willing them, yet he doth not will that they ſhould always be. God did not perpetually will the doing thoſe things which he once decreed to be done: he decreed that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, but he did not decree that Chriſt ſhould always ſuffer; ſo he willed the Moſaical rites for a time, but he did not will that they ſhould always continue; he willed that they ſhould endure for a time, and when the time came for their ceaſing, God had been mutable if he had not put an end to them, becauſe his will had fixed ſuch a period: ſo that the changing of thoſe things which he had once appointed to be practiſed, is ſo far from charging God with changeableneſs, that God would be mutable if he did not take them away, ſince he decreed, as well their abolition at ſuch a time, as their continuance till ſuch a time; ſo that the removal of them was purſuant to his unchangeable will and decree. If God had decreed that ſuch laws ſhould always continue, and afterwards changed that decree, and reſolved the abrogation of them; then indeed God had been mutable; he had reſcinded one decree by another; he had then ſeen an error in his firſt reſolve, and there muſt be ſome weakneſs in the reaſon and wiſdom whereon it was grounded: but it was not ſo here; for the change of thoſe laws is ſo far from ſtirring God with any mutability, that the very change of them is no other than the iſſue of his eternal decree; for from eternity he purpoſed in himſelf to change this or that diſpenſation, though he did decree to bring ſuch a diſpenſation into the world: the decree itſelf was eternal and immutable, but the thing decreed was temporary and mutable. As a decree from eternity doth not make the thing decreed to be eternal; ſo neither doth the immutability of the decree, render the thing ſo decreed to be immutable:

table: as for example, God decreed from all eternity to create the world; the eternity of this decree did not make the world to be in being, and actually created from eternity; ſo God decreed immutably that the world ſo created ſhould continue for ſuch a time; the decree is immutable if the world periſh at that time, and would not be immutable if the world did endure beyond that time that God hath fixed for the duration of it. As when a prince orders a man's remaining in priſon for ſo many days, if he be prevailed with to give him a delivery before thoſe days, or to continue him in cuſtody for the ſame crime after thoſe days, his order is changed; but if he orders the delivery of him juſt at that time, till which he had before decreed that he ſhould continue in priſon, the purpoſe and order of the prince remains firm, and the change in the ſtate of the priſoner, is the fruit of that firm and fixed reſolution: ſo that we muſt diſtinguiſh between the perſon decreeing, the decree itſelf, and the thing decreed. The perſon decreeing, *viz.* God, is in himſelf immutable, and the decree is immutable; but the thing decreed may be mutable; and if it were not changed according to the firſt purpoſe, it would argue the decree in itſelf to be changed; for while a man wills that this may be done now, and another thing done afterwards, the ſame will remains, and though there be a change in the effects, there is no change in the will.

The immutability of God's will doth not infringe the liberty of it. The liberty of God's will conſiſts with the neceſſity of continuing his purpoſe. God is neceſſarily good, immutably good; yet he is freely ſo, and would not be otherwiſe than what he is. God was free in his firſt purpoſe; and purpoſing this or that by an infallible and unerring wiſdom, it would be a weakneſs to change the purpoſe; but indeed the liberty of God's will doth not ſeem ſo much to conſiſt in an indifferency to this or that,

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as is an independency on any thing without himſelf: his will was free, becauſe it did not depend upon the objects about which his will was converſant. To be immutably good, is no point of imperfection, but the height of perfection.

As God is unchangeable in regard of eſſence, knowledge, purpoſe; ſo he is unchangeable in re-regard of place. He cannot be changed in time, becauſe he is eternity; ſo he cannot be changed in place, becauſe he hath ubiquity: he is eternal, therefore cannot be changed in time; he is omnipreſent, therefore cannot be changed in place: he doth not begin to be in one place wherein he was not before, or ceaſe to be in a place wherein he was before. He that fills every place in heaven and earth, cannot change place; he cannot leave one to poſſeſs another, that is equally in regard of his eſſence in all: *He fills heaven and earth*, Jer. xxiii. 24. The heavens that are not ſubject to thoſe changes to which ſublunary bodies are ſubject, that are not diminiſhed in quantity or quality; yet they are always changing place in regard of their motion; no part of them doth always continue in the ſame point: but God hath no change of his nature, becauſe he is moſt inward in every thing; he is ſubſtantially in all ſpaces, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world which he doth not fill; no place can be imagined wherein he doth not exiſt. Suppoſe a million of worlds above and about this, incircling one another; his eſſence would be in every part and point of thoſe worlds; becauſe it is indiviſible, it cannot be divided; nor can it be contained within thoſe created limits of millions of worlds, when the moſt ſoaring and beſt coining fancy hath run through all creatures, to the higheſt ſphere of the heavens, and imagined one world after another, till it can fancy no more: none of theſe, nor all of them, can contain God; for the *heaven of heavens cannot contain him*, 1 Kings viii. 27.

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He is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, Job xi. 8. and poſſeſſes infinite imaginary ſpaces beyond created limits. He who hath no cauſe of being, can have no limits of being; and though by creation he began to be in the world, yet he did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the ſame imaginary ſpace from eternity; for he was always in himſelf by his own eternal *ubi*.

Therefore obſerve, that when God is ſaid to draw near to us, when we draw near to him; it is not by local motion or change of place, but by ſpecial and ſpiritual influences, by exciting and ſupporting grace. As we ordinarily ſay, the ſun is come into the houſe when yet it remains in its place and order in the heavens, becauſe the beams pierce through the windows and enlighten the room: ſo when God is ſaid to come down or deſcend; it is not by a change of place, but a change of outward acts, when he puts forth himſelf in ways of freſh mercy or new judgments, in the effluxes of his love or the flames of his wrath. When good men feel the warm beams of his grace refreſhing them, or wicked men feel the hot coals of his anger ſcorching them. God's drawing near to us, is not ſo much his coming to us, but his drawing us to him: as when water-men pull a rope that is in one end faſtened to the ſhore, and the other end to the veſſel; the ſhore is immoveable, yet it ſeems to the eye to come to them, but they really move to the ſhore. God is an immoveable rock; we are floating and uncertain creatures; while he ſeems to approach to us, he doth really make us to approach to him: he comes not to us by any change of place himſelf, but draws us to him by a change of mind, will, and affections in us.

The ſecond thing propounded is, the reaſons to prove God immutable—heathens acknowledged him to be ſo.—The name Jehovah ſignifies this attribute, Ex. iii. 14. *I am that I am, I am hath ſent me to you.*

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It ſignifies his immutability as well as eternity. I Am ſignifies his eternity; that or the ſame That I Am, his immutability: as it reſpects the eſſence of God, it ſignifies his unchangeable being from eternity to eternity; as it reſpects the creature, it ſignifies his conſtancy in his counſels and promiſes, which ſpring from no other cauſe but the unchangeableneſs of his nature. The reaſon why men ſtand not to their covenant, is becauſe they are not always the ſame: I Am, that is, I am the ſame, before the creation of the world, and ſince the creation of the world; before the entrance of ſin, and ſince the entrance of ſin; before their going into Egypt, and while they remain in Egypt. The very name Jehovah, bears according to the grammatical order, a mark of God's unchangeableneſs; it never hath any thing added to it, nor any thing taken from it; it hath no plural number, no affixes, a cuſtom peculiar to the eaſtern languages; it never changes its letters as other words do. All things that are changed, ceaſe to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not, and therefore cannot have the title truly applied to them, they are; they are indeed, but like a river, in a continual flux, that no man ever ſees the ſame; let his eye be fixed upon one place of it, the water he ſees, ſlides away, and that which he ſaw not, ſucceeds in its place; let him take his eye off but for the leaſt moment, and fix it there again, and he ſees not the ſame that he ſaw before. All ſenſible things are in a perpetual ſtream; that which is ſometimes this, and ſometimes that, is not, becauſe it is not always the ſame; whatſoever is changed, is ſomething now which it was not always: but of God it is ſaid I Am, which could not be if he were changeable; for it may be ſaid of him he is not, as well he is, becauſe he is not what he was; if we ſay not of him, he was, nor

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he will be, but only he is; whence ſhould any change arrive? he muſt invincibly remain the ſame, of whoſe nature, perfections, knowledge, and will, it cannot be ſaid it was, as if it were not now in him; or it ſhall be, as if it were not yet in him; but he is, becauſe he doth not only exiſt, but doth always exiſt the ſame. I Am, that is, I receive from no other what I am in myſelf: he depends upon no other in his eſſence, knowledge, purpoſes, and therefore hath no changing power over him.

If God were changeable, he could not be the moſt perfect being. God is the moſt perfect being, and poſſeſſes in himſelf infinite and eſſential goodneſs, Mat. v. 48. *Your heavenly Father is perfect*: if he could change from that perfection, he were not the higheſt exemplar and copy for us to write after. If God doth change, it muſt be either to a greater perfection than he had before, or to a leſs, *mutatio perfectiva vel amiſſiva*; if he changes to acquire a perfection he had not, then he was not before the moſt excellent being neceſſarily; he was not what he might be; there was a defect in him, and a privation of that which was better than what he had and was; and then he was not always the beſt, and ſo was not always God; and being not not always God, could never be God; for to begin to be God is againſt the notion of God: not to a leſs perfection than he had; that were to change to imperfection, and to loſe a perfection which he poſſeſſed before, and ceaſe to be the beſt being; for he would loſe ſome good which he had, and acquire ſome evil which he was free from before: ſo that the ſovereign perfection of God, is an invincible bar to any change in him; for which way ſoever you caſt it for a change, his ſupreme excellency is impaired and nulled by it. For in all change, there is ſomething from which a thing is changed, and ſomething to which it is changed; ſo that on the one part, there is a loſs of what it had, and on the other

other part, there is an acquiſition of what it had not: if to the better, he was not perfect, and ſo was not God; if to the worſe, he will not be perfect, and ſo be no longer God after that change.

The third thing to ſpeak to is, that immutability is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Mutability is natural to every creature as a creature, and immutability is the ſole perfection of God: he only is infinite wiſdom, able to fore-know future events; he only is infinitely powerful, able to call forth all means to effect; ſo that wanting neither wiſdom to contrive, nor ſtrength to execute, he cannot alter his counſel: none being above him, nothing in him contrary to him, and being defective in no bleſſedneſs and perfection, he cannot vary in his eſſence and nature. Had not immutability as well as eternity been a property ſolely pertaining to the divine nature, as well as creative power and eternal duration, the Apoſtles argument to prove Chriſt to be God from this perpetual ſameneſs, had come ſhort of any convincing ſtrength. Theſe words of the text he applies to Chriſt, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. *They ſhall be changed, but thou art the ſame.* There had been no ſtrength in the reaſon, if immutability by nature did belong to any creature.

The changeableneſs of all creatures is evident;

1. Of corporeal creatures, it is evident to ſenſe. All plants and animals, as they have their duration bounded in certain limits; ſo while they do exiſt they proceed from their riſe to their fall; they paſs through many ſenſible alterations, from one degree of growth to another, from buds to bloſſoms, from bloſſoms to flowers and fruits; they come to their pitch that nature hath ſet them, and return back to the ſtate from whence they ſprung; there is not a day but they make ſome acquiſition, or ſuffer ſome loſs; they die and ſpring up every day; nothing in them more certain than their inconſtancy: *The creature is ſubject to vanity.* The heavenly bodies

bodies are changing their place; the ſun every day is running his race, and ſtays not in the ſame point; and though they are not changed in their eſſence, yet they are in their place: ſome indeed ſay there is a continual generation of light in the ſun, as there is a loſs of light by the caſting out its beams, as in a fountain there is a flowing out of the ſtreams, and a continual generation of ſupply: and though theſe heavenly bodies have kept their ſtanding and motion from the time of their creation; yet both the ſun's ſtanding ſtill in Joſhua's time, and its going back in Hezekiah's time, ſhew that they are changeable at the pleaſure of God.

But in man, the change is perpetually viſible; every day there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from one will to another, from paſſion to paſſion, ſometimes ſad and ſometimes cheerful, ſometimes craving this and preſently nauſeating it; his body changes from health to ſickneſs, or from weakneſs to ſtrength; ſome alteration there is either in body or mind. Man who is the nobleſt creature, the ſubordinate end of the creation of other things, cannot aſſure himſelf of a conſiſtency and fixedneſs in any thing the ſhort ſpace of a day, no not of a minute; all his months are months of vanity; whence the pſalmiſt calls man at the beſt eſtate, altogether vanity, a mere heap of vanity: as he contains in his nature the nature of all creatures, ſo he inherits in his nature the vanity of all creatures: a little world, the center of the world and of the vanity of the world; yea ligher than vanity; more moveable than a feather; toſt between paſſion and paſſion, daily changing his end, and changing the means; an image of nothing.

Spiritual natures, as angels, they change not in their being, but that is from the indulgence of God: they change not in their goodneſs, but that

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is not from their nature, but divine grace in their confirmation; but they change in their knowledge, they know more by Chriſt than they did by creation; they have an addition of knowledge every day, by the providential diſpenſations of God to his church; and the increaſe of their aſtoniſhment and love, is according to the increaſe of their knowledge and inſight: they cannot have a new diſcovery, without new admirations of what is diſcovered to them; there is a change in their joy, when there is a change in a ſinner: they were changed in their eſſence, when they were made ſuch glorious ſpirits of nothing; ſome of them were changed in their will, when of holy they became impure: the good angels were changed in their underſtandings, when the glories of God in Chriſt were preſented to their view; and all can be changed in their eſſence again; and as they were made of nothing, ſo by the power of God may be reduced to nothing again. So glorified ſouls ſhall have an unchanged operation about God, for they ſhall behold his face without any grief or fear of loſs, without vagrant thoughts; but they can never be unchangeable in their nature, becauſe they can never paſs from finite to infinite. No creature can be unchangeable in its nature.

The fourth thing propounded is, ſome propoſitions to clear this unchangeableneſs of God, from any thing that ſeems contrary to it.

The firſt propoſition, there was no change in God when he began to create the world in time. The creation was a real change, but the change was not ſubjectively in God, but in the creature; the creature began to be what it was not before. Creation is conſidered as active or paſſive; active creation is the will and power of God to create; this is from eternity, becauſe God willed from eternity to create in time; this never had beginning, for God never began in time to underſtand any thing, to will any thing, or be able to do any thing; but he always

underſtood, and always willed thoſe things which he determined from eternity to produce in time. The decree of God may be taken for the act decreeing, that is eternal and the ſame; or for the object decreed, that is in time: ſo that there may be a change in the object, but not in the will whereby the object doth exiſt.

There was no change in God by the act of creation, becauſe there was no new will in him: there was no new act of his will which was not before. The creation began in time, but the will of creating was from eternity; the work was new, but the decree whence that new work ſprung, was as ancient as the Ancient of Days: when the time of creating came, God was not made *ex nolente volens*, as we are; for whatſoever God willed to be now done, he willed from eternity to be done; but he willed alſo that it ſhould not be done till ſuch an inſtant of time, and that it ſhould not exiſt before ſuch a time. If God had willed the creation of the world only at that time when the world was produced and not before, then indeed God had been changeable: But though God ſpake that word, which he had not ſpoke before, whereby the world was brought into act; yet he did not will that which he willed not before. God did not create by a new counſel, or new will, but that which was from eternity, Eph. i. 9. All things are wrought according to that *purpoſe in himſelf*, and according to *the counſel of his will*, ver. 11; and as the holineſs of the elect is the fruit of his eternal will *before the foundation of the world*, ver. 4. ſo likewiſe is the exiſtence of things, and of thoſe perſons whom he did elect: as when an artificer frames a houſe or a temple according to that model he had in his mind ſome years before, there is no change in the model in his mind; the artificer is the ſame, though the work is produced by him ſome time after he had framed that copy of it in his own mind; but there is a change of the thing produced by

by him according to that model. Or when a rich man intends four or five years hence, if he lives, to build an hoſpital, is there any change in his will, when after the expiration of that time he builds and endows it? Though it be after his will, yet it is the fruit of his precedent will; ſo God from all eternity did will and command that the creatures ſhould exiſt in ſuch a part of time; and by this eternal will, all things, whether paſt, preſent or to come, did, do, and ſhall exiſt at that point of time which that will did appoint for them; not as though God had a new will when things ſtood up in being, but only that which was prepared in his immutable counſel and will from eternity, doth then appear. There can be no inſtant fixed from eternity, wherein it can be ſaid, God did not will the creation of the world; for had the will of God for the ſhorteſt moment been undetermined to the creation of the world, and afterwards reſolved upon it, there had been a moral change in God from not willing to willing; but this there was not, for God executes nothing in time which he had not ordained from eternity, and appointed all the means and circumſtances whereby it ſhould be brought about. As the determination of our Saviour to ſuffer was not a new will, but an eternal counſel, and wrought no change in God.

The ſecond propoſition. There was no change in the divine nature of the Son, when he aſſumed human nature. There was an union of the two natures, but no change of the deity into the humanity, or of the humanity into the deity; both preſerved their peculiar properties: the humanity was changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; not by being brought into an equality with it, for that was impoſſible that a creature ſhould become equal to the creator; he took the form of a ſervant, but he loſt not the form of God, he deſpoiled not himſelf of the per-

fections of the deity; he was indeed emptied, *and became of no reputation*, but he did not ceaſe to be God, though he was reputed to be only a man, and a very mean one too: the glory of his divinity was not extinguiſhed nor diminiſhed, though it was obſcured and darkened under the vail of our infirmities; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the ſun when it is ſhadowed by the interpoſition of a cloud; his blood while it was pouring out from his veins was the *blood of God*; and therefore when he was bowing the head of his humanity upon the croſs, he had the nature and perfections of God; for had he ceaſed to be God, he had been a mere creature, and his ſufferings would have been of as little value and ſatisfaction as the ſufferings of a creature. He could not have been a ſufficient mediator, had he ceaſed to be God; and he had ceaſed to be God, had he loſt any one perfection proper to the divine nature; and loſing none, he loſt not this of unchangeableneſs, which is none of the meaneſt belonging to the deity: why by his union with the human nature ſhould he loſe this, any more than he loſt his omniſcience, which he diſcovered by his knowledge of the thoughts of men; or his mercy, which he manifeſted to the height in the time of his ſuffering? That is truly a change, when a thing ceaſeth to be what it was before; that was not in Chriſt: he aſſumed our nature without laying aſide his own. When the ſoul is united to the body, doth it loſe any of thoſe perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the ſubſtance or qualities of it? No, but it makes a change in the body, and of a dull lump it makes it a living maſs, conveys vigor and ſtrength to it; and by its power, quickens it to ſenſe and motion; ſo did the divine nature and human remain entire; there was no change of the one into the other, as Chriſt by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art

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change ſand or aſhes into glaſs: and when *he prays for the glory he had with God before the world was*, he prays that a glory he had in his deity, might ſhine forth in his perſon as mediator, and be evidenced in that height and ſplendor ſuitable to his dignity which had been ſo lately darkened by his abaſement; that as he had appeared to be the ſon of man in the infirmity of the fleſh, he might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of his perſon; that he might appear to be the Son of God and the ſon of man in one perſon.

Again, there could be no change in this union; for in a real change, ſomething is acquired which was not poſſeſſed before, neither formally nor eminently; but the divinity had from eternity before the incarnation, all the perfections of the human nature eminently in a nobler manner than they are in themſelves, and therefore could not be changed by a real union.

The third propoſition. Repentance and other affections aſcribed to God in ſcripture, argue no change in God. We often read of God's repenting, repenting of the good he promiſed, and of the evil he threatened, or of the work he hath wrought. We muſt obſerve therefore that repentance is not properly in God. He is a pure ſpirit, and is not capable of thoſe paſſions, which are ſigns of weakneſs and impotence, or ſubject to thoſe regrets, we are ſubject to: where there is a proper repentance, there is a want of foreſight, an ignorance of what would ſucceed, or a defect in the examination of the occurrences, which might fall within conſideration: all repentance of a fact, is grounded upon a miſtake in the event which was not foreſeen; or upon an after knowledge of the evil of the thing which was acted by the perſon repenting: but God is ſo wiſe that he cannot err, ſo holy he cannot do evil; and his certain preſcience or foreknowledge, ſecures him againſt any unex-

pected events. God doth not act but upon clear and infallible reaſon; and a change upon paſſion, is accounted by all, ſo great a weakneſs in man, that none can entertain ſo unworthy a conceit of God. Where he is ſaid to repent, he is alſo ſaid to grieve; now no proper grief can be imagined to be in God: as repentance is inconſiſtent with infallible foreſight, ſo is grief no leſs inconſiſtent with undefiled bleſſedneſs: *God is bleſſed for ever*, and therefore nothing can befall him that can ſtain that bleſſedneſs; his bleſſedneſs would be impaired, and interrupted, while he is repenting, though he did ſoon rectify that which is the cauſe of his repentance: *God is of one mind, and who can turn him? what his ſoul deſires that he doth.*

But God accommodates himſelf in the ſcripture to our weak capacity. God hath no more of a proper repentance, than he hath of a real body, though he in accommodation to our weakneſs, aſcribes to himſelf the members of our bodies to ſet out to our underſtanding the greatneſs of his perfections; we muſt not conclude him a body like us; ſo becauſe he is ſaid to have anger and repentance, we muſt not conclude him to have paſſions like us: when we cannot fully comprehend him as he is, he clothes himſelf with our nature in his expreſſions that we may apprehend him as we are able, and by an inſpection into ourſelves, learn ſomething of the nature of God; yet thoſe human ways of ſpeaking ought to be underſtood in a manner agreeable to the infinite excellency and majeſty of God; and are only deſigned to mark out ſomething in God which hath a reſemblance with ſomething in us: as we cannot ſpeak to God as gods, but as men; ſo we cannot underſtand him ſpeaking to us as a God, unleſs he condeſcend to ſpeak to us like a man. God therefore frames his language to our dulneſs, not to his own ſtate; and informs us by our own phraſes, what he would have us learn of his nature; as

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nurſes talk broken language to young children. In all ſuch expreſſions therefore, we muſt aſcribe the perfection we conceive in them to God, and lay the imperfection at the door of the creature.

Therefore repentance in God is only a change of his outward conduct, according to his infallible foreſight and immutable will.—He changes the way of his providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence; when God ſpeaks of his *repenting that he had made man*; it is only his changing his conduct from a way of kindneſs to a way of ſeverity, and is a word ſuited to our capacities to ſignify his deteſtation of ſin and his reſolution to puniſh it, after man had made himſelf quite another thing, than God had made him; it repents me, that is, I am purpoſed to deſtroy the world; as he that repents of his work throws it away: as if a potter caſt away a veſſel he had framed, it were a teſtimony, that he repented that ever he took pains about it: ſo the deſtruction of them ſeems to be a repentance in God that ever he made them; it is a change of events, not of counſels. Repentance in us is a grief for a former fact, and a changing of our courſe in it: grief is not in God, but his repentance is a willing a thing ſhould not be as it was, which will was fixed from eternity; for God foreſeeing man would fall, and decreeing to permit it, he could not be ſaid to repent in time of what he did not repent from eternity; and therefore if there were no repentance in God from eternity, there could be none in time. But God is ſaid to repent, when he changes the diſpoſition of affairs without himſelf; as men when they repent, alter the courſe of their actions, ſo God alters things *extra ſe*, or without himſelf, but changes nothing of his own purpoſe within himſelf. It rather notes the action he is about to do, than any thing in his own nature, or any change in his eternal purpoſe.

God repenting of his kindneſs is nothing but an inflicting of puniſhment, which the creature by the change of his carriage hath merited: as his repenting of the evil threatened is the withholding the puniſhment denounced, when the creature hath humbly ſubmitted to his authority and acknowledged his crime.

Or elſe we may underſtand thoſe expreſſions of joy, grief and repentance, to ſignify thus much, that the things declared to be the objects of joy, grief and repentance are of that nature, that if God were capable of our paſſions, he would diſcover himſelf in ſuch caſes as we do: as when the prophets mention the joys and applaudings of heaven, earth and ſea, they only ſignify that the things they ſpeak of are ſo good, that if the heavens and the ſea, had natures capable of joy, they would expreſs it upon that occaſion in ſuch a manner as we do: ſo would God have joy at the obedience of men, and grief at the unworthy carriage of men, and repent of his kindneſs, when men abuſe it, and repent of his puniſhment, when men reform under his rod, were the majeſty of his nature capable of ſuch affections.

Fourth propoſition. The not fulfilling of ſome predictions in ſcripture, which ſeem to imply a changeableneſs of the divine will, do not argue any change in it. As when he reprieved Hezekiah from death, after a meſſage ſent by the prophet Iſaiah, that he ſhould die, and when he made an arreſt of that judgment he had threatened by Jonah againſt Nineveh.

There is not indeed the ſame reaſon of promiſes and threatenings altogether, for in promiſing the obligation lies upon God, and the right to demand is in the party that performs the condition of the promiſe: but in threatenings, the obligation lies upon the ſinner, and God's right to puniſh is declared hereby: ſo that though God doth not puniſh,

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his will is not changed; becauſe his will was to declare the demerit of ſin, and his right to puniſh upon the commiſſion of it; though he may not puniſh according to the ſtrict letter of the threatening the perſon ſinning, but relax his own law for the honour of his attributes, and transfer the puniſhment from the offender to a perſon ſubſtituted in his room; this was the caſe in the firſt threatening againſt man, and the ſubſtituting a ſurety in the place of the malefactor.

But the anſwer to theſe caſes is this, that where we find predictions in ſcripture declared, and yet not executed, we muſt conſider them, not as abſolute but conditional, or as the civil law calls it, an interlocutory ſentence. God declared what would follow by natural cauſes, or by the demerit of man, not what he would abſolutely himſelf do: And in many of thoſe predictions, though the condition be not expreſſed, yet it is to be underſtood; ſo the promiſes of God are to be underſtood with the condition of perſeverance in well doing; and threatenings with a clauſe of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent: and this God lays down as a general caſe, always to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting his threatenings againſt a nation, and the ſame reaſon will hold in threatenings againſt a particular perſon. Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and pull down and deſtroy it; if that nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*; and ſo when he ſpeaks of planting a nation, if they do evil, he will repent of the good, &c. It is an univerſal rule by which all particular caſes of this nature are to be tried; ſo that when man's repentance arrives, God remains firm in his firſt will, always equal to himſelf, and it is not he that changes, but man. For ſince the interpoſition of the mediator,

mediator, with an eye to whom God governed the world after the fall, the right of punishing was taken off if men repented, and mercy was to flow out, if by a conversion men returned to their duty, Ezek. xviii 20, 21. This I say is grounded upon God's entertaining the Mediator; for the covenant of works discovered no such thing as repentance or pardon. Now these general rules are to be the interpreters of particular cases: so that predictions of good are not to be counted absolute, if men return to evil; nor predictions of evil, if men be thereby reduced to a repentance of their crimes.

So Nineveh shall be destroyed, that is, according to the general rule; unless the inhabitants repent, which they did; they manifested a belief of the threatening, and gave glory to God by giving credit to the prophet: and they had a notion of this rule God lays down in the other prophets; for they had an apprehension that upon their humbling themselves, they might escape the threatened vengeance, and stop the shooting those arrows that were ready in the bow. Though Jonah proclaimed destruction, without declaring any hopes of an arrest of judgment; yet their natural notion of God, afforded some natural hopes of relief, if they did their duty, and spurned not against the prophet's message; and therefore saith one, God did not always express this condition, because it was needless; his own rule revealed in scripture was sufficient for some; and the natural notion all men had of God's goodness, upon their repentance, made it not absolutely necessary to declare it: and besides, saith he, it is bootless; the expressing it can do but little good; secure ones will repent never the sooner, but rather presume upon their hopes of God's forbearance, and linger out their repentance till it be too late. And to work men to repentance, whom he hath purposed to spare, he threatens them with

with terrible judgments; which, by how much the more terrible and peremptory they are, are likely to be more effectual for that end God in his purpoſe deſigns them, *viz.* to humble them under a ſenſe of their demerit, and an acknowledgement of his righteous juſtice; and therefore though they be abſolutely denounced, yet they are to be conditionally interpreted with a reſervation of repentance. As for that anſwer which one gives, that by forty days was not meant forty natural days, but prophetical days, that is, years, a day for a year; and that the city was deſtroyed forty years after by the Medes. The expreſſion of God's repenting upon their humiliation, puts a bar to that interpretation: God repented, that is, he did not bring the puniſhment upon them according to thoſe days the prophet had expreſſed; and therefore forty natural days are to be underſtood; and if it were meant of forty years, and they were deſtroyed at the end of that term, how could God be ſaid to repent, ſince according to that, the puniſhment threatened was according to the time fixed brought upon them? and the deſtruction of it forty years after, will not be eaſily evinced, if Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam, the ſecond king of Iſrael, as he did; and Nineveh was deſtroyed in the time of Joſiah, king of Judah. But the other anſwer is plain. God did not fulfil what he had threatened, becauſe they reformed what they had committed: when the threatening was made, they were a fit object for juſtice; but when they repented, they were a fit object for a merciful reſpite. To threaten when ſins are high, is a part of God's juſtice; not to execute when ſins are revoked by repentance, is a part of God's goodneſs. And in the caſe of Hezekiah, Iſaiah comes with a meſſage from God, that he ſhould *ſet his houſe in order*, for he ſhall die; that is, the diſeaſe was mortal, and no outward applications could in their own nature reſiſt the diſtemper.

diſtemper. *Behold, I will add to thy days fifteen years; I will heal thee:* it ſeems to be one entire meſſage, becauſe the latter part of it was ſo ſuddenly after the other committed to Iſaiah to be delivered to Hezekiah; for he was not gone out of the king's houſe, before he was ordered to return with the news of his health, by an extraordinary indulgence of God againſt the power of nature and force of the diſeaſe: *behold I will add to thy life*; noting it as an extraordinary thing: he was in the ſecond court of the king's houſe when this word came to him; the king's houſe having three courts, ſo that he was not gone above half way out of the palace. God might ſend this meſſage of death, to prevent the pride Hezekiah might ſwell with for his deliverance from Senacherib: as Paul had a meſſenger of Satan to buffet him to prevent his lifting up; and this good man was ſubject to this ſin, as we find afterwards in the caſe of the Babyloniſh embaſſadors: and God delayed this other part of the meſſage to humble him, and draw out his prayer; and as ſoon as ever he found Hezekiah in this temper, he ſent Iſaiah with a comfortable meſſage of recovery: ſo that the will of God was to ſignify to him the mortality of his diſtemper, and afterwards to relieve him by a meſſage of an extraordinary recovery.

The fifth propoſition. God is not changed, when of loving to any creatures he becomes angry with them, or of angry he becomes appeaſed. The change in theſe caſes is in the creature; according to the alteration in the creature, it ſtands in a various relation to God: an innocent creature is the object of his kindneſs, an offending creature is the object of his anger; there is a change in the diſpenſations of God, as there is a change in the creature making himſelf capable of ſuch diſpenſations. God always acts according to the immutable nature of his holineſs, and can no more change

change in his affections to good and evil, than he can in his eſſence. When the devils now fallen, ſtood as glorious angels, they were the objects of God's love, becauſe holy; when they fell, they were the objects of God's hatred, becauſe impure; the ſame reaſon which made him love them while they were pure, made him hate them, when they were criminal: the reaſon of his various diſpenſations to them was the ſame in both, as conſidered in God, his immutable holineſs; but, as reſpecting the creature, different; the nature of the creature was changed, but the divine holy nature of God remained the ſame: *With the pure thou wilt ſhew thyſelf pure, and with the froward thou wilt ſhew thyſelf froward:* he is a refreſhing light to thoſe that obey him, and a conſuming fire to thoſe that reſiſt him. Though the ſame angels were not always loved; yet the ſame reaſon that moved him to love them, moved him to hate them. It had argued a change in God, if he had loved them always, in whatſoever poſture they were towards him: it could not be counted love, but a weakneſs and impotent fondneſs; the change is in the object, not in the affection of God: for the object loved before, is not beloved now, becauſe that which was the motive of love, is not now in it: ſo that the creature having a different ſtate from what it had, falls under a different affection or diſpenſation.

It had been a mutable affection in God, to love that which was not worthy of love, with the ſame love wherewith he loved that which had the greateſt reſemblance to himſelf: had God loved the fallen angels in that ſtate, and for that ſtate, he had hated himſelf, becauſe he had loved that which was contrary to himſelf, and the image of his own holineſs, which made them appear before, good in his ſight. The will of God is unchangeably ſet to love righteouſneſs, and hate iniquity, and from this

this hatred to puniſh it: and if a righteous creature contracts the wrath of God, or a ſinful creature hath the communications of God's love; it muſt be by a change in themſelves. Is the ſun changed, when it hardens one thing and ſoftens another, according to the diſpoſition of the ſeveral ſubjects? or where the ſun makes a flower more fragrant, and a dead carcaſe more noiſome: there are divers defects, but the reaſon of that diverſity is not in the ſun, but in the ſubject; the ſun is the ſame, and produceth thoſe different effects, by the ſame quality of heat: ſo if an unholy ſoul approach to God, God looks angrily upon him; If a holy ſoul come before him, the ſame immutable perfection in God draws out his kindneſs towards him. As ſome think, the ſun would rather refreſh than ſcorch us, if our bodies were of the ſame nature and ſubſtance with that luminary.

As the will of God for creating the world, was no new, but an eternal will, though it manifeſted itſelf in time; ſo the will of God for the puniſhment of ſin, or the reconciliation of the ſinner, was no new will: though his wrath in time break out in the effects of it upon ſinners, and his love flows out in effects of it upon penitents. Chriſt by his death reconciling God to man, did not alter the will of God, but did what was conſonant to his eternal will: he came not to change his will, but to execute it. *Lo I come to do thy will, O God.* And the grace of God in Chriſt, was not a new grace, but an old grace in a new appearance; *the grace of God hath appeared.*

The ſixth propoſition, A change of laws by God argues no change in God; when God abrogates ſome laws which he had ſettled in the church and enacts others.—I ſpake ſomething of this the laſt day: I ſhall only add this. God commanded one thing to the Jews, when the church was in an infant ſtate: and removed thoſe laws, when the church came to ſome growth. The elements of the world were

were ſuited to the ſtate of children. A mother feeds not the infant with the ſame diet as ſhe doth when it is grown up. Our Saviour acquainted not his diſciples with ſome things at one time which he did at another, becauſe they were not able to bear them; where was the change, in Chriſt's will, or in their growth from a ſtate of weakneſs to that of ſtrength? a phyſician preſcribes not the ſame things to a perſon in health, as he doth to one conflicting with a diſtemper; nor the ſame thing in the beginning, as he doth in the ſtate or declination of the diſeaſe. The phyſicians will and ſkill are the ſame, but the capacity and neceſſity of the patient for this or that medicine or method of proceeding, are not the ſame.

When God changed the ceremonial law, there was no change in the divine will, but an execution of his will; for when God commanded the obſervance of the law, he intended not the perpetuity of it; nay, in the prophets he declares the ceſſation of it; he decreed to command it, but only for ſuch a time; ſo that the abrogation of it was no leſs an execution of his decree, than the eſtabliſhment of it for a ſeaſon was; the commanding of it was purſuant to his decree for the appointing of it, and the nulling of it was purſuant to his decree of continuing it only for ſuch a ſeaſon: ſo that in all this there was no change in the will of God.

The counſel of God ſtands ſure; what change ſoever there are in the world, are not in God or his will, but in the events of things, and the different relations of things to God: it is in the creature, not in the creator. The ſun always remains of the ſame hue, and is not diſcoloured in itſelf, becauſe it ſhines green through a green glaſs, and blue through a blue glaſs; the different colours come from the glaſs, not from the ſun: the change is always in the diſpoſition of the creature, not in the nature of God or his will.

Fifth, Uſe.

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1. For information. If God be unchangeable in his nature, and immutability be a property of God, then Chriſt hath a divine nature. This in the Pſalm is applied to Chriſt in the Hebrews, chap. i. 11. where he joins the citation out of this Pſalm, with that out of Pſalm xlv. 6. 7. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; thou haſt loved righteouſneſs and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows; and thou Lord in the beginning haſt laid the foundation of the earth, &c.* As the firſt muſt neceſſarily be meant of Chriſt the Mediator, and therein he is diſtinguiſhed from God, as one anointed by him; ſo the other muſt be meant of Chriſt, whereby he is made one with God in regard of the creation and diſſolution of the world, in regard of eternity and immutability. Both the teſtimonies are linked together by the copulative AND, *and thou Lord,* declaring thereby that they are both to be underſtood of the ſame perſon, the Son of God: the deſign of the chapter is to prove Chriſt to be God; and ſuch things are ſpoken of him as could not belong to any creature, no, not to the moſt excellent of the angels: the ſame perſon that is ſaid to be anointed above his fellows, and is ſaid to lay the foundation of the earth and heavens, is ſaid to be the ſame, that is, the ſame in himſelf: the prerogative of ſameneſs belongs to that perſon as well as creation of heaven and earth.

Uſe 2. Of comfort.

The immutability of God is a ſtrong ground of conſolation.—Subjects wiſh a good prince to live for ever, as being loath to change him; but care not how ſoon they are rid of an oppreſſor. This unchangeableneſs of God's will, ſhews him as ready to accept any that come to him as ever he was; ſo that we may with confidence make

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our addreſſes to him, ſince he cannot change his affections to goodneſs. The fear of change in a friend hinders a full reliance upon him; an aſſurance of ſtability encourages hope and confidence. This attribute is the ſtrongeſt prop for faith in all our addreſſes: it is not a ſingle perfection, but the glory of all thoſe, that belong to his nature; for he is *unchangeable in his love*, Jer. xxxi. 3. *in his truth*, Pſal. cxvii. 2. The more ſolemn revelation of himſelf in this name Jehovah, which ſignifies chiefly his eternity and immutability, was to ſupport the Iſraelites faith, in expectation of a deliverance from Egypt, that he had not retracted his purpoſe, and his promiſe made to Abraham for giving Canaan to his poſterity.

The covenant ſtands unchangeable. Mutable creatures break their leagues and covenants, and ſnap them aſunder, like Samſon's cords, when they are not accommodated to their intereſts. But an unchangeable God keeps his; *the mountains ſhall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, nor ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed.* The heaven and earth ſhall ſooner fall aſunder, and the ſtrongeſt and firmeſt parts of the creation crumble to duſt ſooner than one *Iota* of my covenant ſhall fail. It depends upon the unchangeableneſs of his will and the unchangeableneſs of his word, and therefore is called *the immutability of his counſel.* Heb. vi. 17. It is the fruit of the everlaſting purpoſe of God; whence the Apoſtle links purpoſe and grace together. A covenant with a nation may be changeable, becauſe it may not be built upon the eternal purpoſe of God to put his fear in the heart: but with reſpect to the creatures obedience. Thus God choſe Jeruſalem, as the place wherein he would dwell for ever, yet he threatens to depart from them, when they had broken covenant with him, *and the glory of the Lord went up from the midſt of*

the city to the mountain on the eaſt ſide. The covenant of grace doth not run I will be your God, if you will be my people: but I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people. Hoſ. ii. 19. &c. *I will betroth thee to me for ever, I will ſay thou art my people, and they ſhall ſay, thou art my God.* His everlaſting purpoſe, is to write his laws in the hearts of the elect. He puts a condition to his covenant of grace, the condition of faith, and he reſolves to work that condition in the hearts of the elect; and therefore believers have two immutable pillars for their ſupport, ſtronger than thoſe erected by Solomon at the porch of the temple, 1 Kings vii. 21. called Jakin and Boaz, to note the firmneſs of that building dedicated to God; theſe are election or the ſtanding counſel of God, and the covenant of grace: he will not revoke the covenant and blot the names of his elect out of the book of life.

Perſeverance is aſcertained.—It conſiſts not with the majeſty of God to call a perſon effectually to himſelf to day, to make him fit for his eternal love, to give him faith, and take away that faith to-morrow; his effectual call is the fruit of his eternal election, and that counſel hath no other foundation, but his conſtant and unchangeable will; a foundation that ſtands ſure, and therefore called the foundation of God, and not of the creature; *the foundation of God ſtands ſure, the Lord knows who are his.* It is not founded upon our own natural ſtrength, it may be then ſubject to change, as all the products of nature are: the fallen angels had created grace in their innocency, but loſt it by their fall. Were this the foundation of the creature, it might ſoon be ſhaken; ſince man after his revolt can aſcribe nothing conſtant to himſelf, but his own inconſtancy: but the foundation is not in the infirmity of nature, but the ſtrength of grace, and of the grace of God who is immutable, who wants not virtue to be able, nor kindneſs to be willing,

willing, to preſerve his own foundation. To what purpoſe doth our Saviour tell his diſciples, their names were written in heaven, but to mark the infallible certainty of ſalvation, by an oppoſition to thoſe things which periſh and have their names written in the earth; or upon the ſand, where they may be defaced? And why ſhould Chriſt order his diſciples to rejoice, that their names were written in heaven, if God were changeable to blot them out again? or why ſhould the apoſtle aſſure us, that though God had rejected the greateſt part of the Jews, he had not therefore rejected his people elected according to his purpoſe and immutable counſel; becauſe there are none of the elect of God but will come to ſalvation? For ſaith he, the election hath obtained it; that is, all thoſe that are of the election have obtained it, and the others are hardened: where the ſeal of ſanctification is ſtamped, it is a teſtimony of God's election, and that foundation ſhall ſtand ſure. The foundation of the Lord ſtands ſure having this ſeal, the Lord knows who are his; that is the foundation, the naming the name of Chriſt, or believing in Chriſt, and departing from iniquity, is the ſeal. As it is impoſſible when God calls thoſe things that are not, but that they ſhould ſpring up into being and appear before him: ſo it is impoſſible, but that the ſeed of God by his eternal purpoſe, ſhould be brought to a ſpiritual life; and that calling cannot be retracted; for that gift and calling is without repentance. And when repentance is removed from God in regard of ſome works, the immutability of thoſe works is declared: and the reaſon of that immutability is their pnre dependance on the eternal favor and unchangeable grace of God, *purpoſed in himſelf*, and not upon the mutability of the creature. Hence their happineſs is not as patents among men, *quam diu bene ſe geſſerint*, ſo long as they behave themſelves well, but they have a

promiſe, that they ſhall behave themſelves ſo as never wholly to depart from God, Jer. xxxiii. 40. *I will make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* God will not turn from them, to do them good, and promiſeth that they ſhall not turn from him for ever or forſake him: and the bottom of it is the everlaſting covenant, and therefore believing and ſealing, for ſecurity, are linked together. Eph. i. 13. And when God doth inwardly teach us his law, he puts in a will not to depart from it, Pſa. cxix. 102. *I have not departed from thy judgments*; what is the reaſon? *For thou haſt taught me.*

By this, eternal happineſs is enſured. This is the inference made from the eternity and unchangeableneſs of God in the verſe following the text, ver. 28. *The children of thy ſervants ſhall continue, and their ſeed ſhall be eſtabliſhed before thee*; this is the ſole concluſion drawn from thoſe perfections of God ſolemnly aſſerted before. The children which the prophets and apoſtles have begotten to thee, ſhall be totally delivered from the reliques of their apoſtacy and the puniſhment due to them, and rendred partakers of immortality with thee, as ſons to dwell in their father's houſe for ever. The ſpirit begins a ſpiritual life here, to fit an immutable life in glory hereafter; where believers ſhall be placed upon a throne that cannot be ſhaken, and poſſeſs a crown that ſhall not be taken off their heads for ever.

God's Omnipreſence.

Jeremiah xxiii. 24.

CAN ANY HIDE HIMSELF IN SECRET PLACES, THAT I SHALL NOT SEE HIM, SAITH THE LORD? DO NOT I FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH, SAITH THE LORD?

BY filling heaven and earth is meant a filling it with his eſſence. No place can be imagined, that is deprived of the preſence of God; and therefore when the ſcripture any where ſpeaks of the preſence of God, it joins heaven and earth together: he ſo fills them, that there is no place without him. We do not ſay a veſſel is full, ſo long as there is any ſpace to contain more. Not a part of heaven, nor a part of earth, but the whole heaven, the whole earth at one and the ſame time. If he were only in one part of heaven, or one part of earth; nay, if there were any part of heaven, or any part of earth void of him, he could not be ſaid to fill them. I fill heaven and earth; not a part of me fills one place, and another part of me fills another; but I, God, fill heaven and earth; I am whole God, filling the heaven; and whole God, filling the earth. I fill heaven, and yet fill earth; I fill earth, and yet fill heaven, and fill heaven and earth at one and the ſame time. God fills his own works, a heathen philoſopher ſaith.

Here then is a deſcription of God's preſence.

1. By power; *am I not a God afar off?* a God in the extenſion of his arm.

2. By knowledge; *ſhall I not ſee them?*

3. By eſſence; as an undeniable ground for inferring the two former; *I fill heaven and earth.*

God is eſſentially every where preſent in heaven and earth.—If God be, he muſt be ſomewhere; that which is no where, is nothing. Since God is, he is in the world; not in one part of it, for then he were circumſcribed by it; if in the world, and only there, though it be a great ſpace, he were alſo limited. Some therefore ſaid, God was every where, and no where: no where, *i. e.* not bounded by any place, nor receiving from any place any thing for his preſervation or ſuſtainment. He is every where, becauſe no creature, either body or ſpirit, can exclude the preſence of his eſſence; for he is not only near, but in every thing; *in him we live, move, and have our being.* Not abſent from any thing, but ſo preſent with them, that they live and move in him, and move more in God, than in the air or earth wherein they are; nearer to us than our fleſh to our bones, than the air to our breath; he cannot be far from them that live, and have every motion in him. The apoſtle doth not ſay, by him, but in him, to ſhew the inwardneſs of his preſence.

As eternity is the perfection whereby he hath neither begining nor end, immutability is the perfection whereby he hath neither increaſe, nor diminution; ſo immenſity or omnipreſence is that whereby he hath neither bounds, nor limitation. As he is in all time, yet ſo as to be above time; ſo is he in all places, yet ſo as to be above limitation by any place. It was a good expreſſion of a heathen to illuſtrate this, that God is a ſphere or circle, whoſe center is every where, and circumference

ference no where. His meaning was, that the eſſence of God was indiviſible, *i. e.* could not be divided. It cannot be ſaid, here and there the lines of it terminate; it is like a line drawn out in infinite ſpaces, that no point can be conceived where its length and breadth ends. The ſea is a vaſt maſs of water; yet to that it is ſaid, *hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no further.* But it cannot be ſaid of God's eſſence, hitherto it reaches, and no further; here it is, and there it is not. It is plain, that God is thus immenſe, becauſe he is infinite; we have reaſon and ſcripture to aſſent to it, though we cannot conceive it. We know that God is eternal, though eternity is too great to be meaſured by the ſhort line of a created underſtanding. We cannot conceive the vaſtneſs and glory of the heavens, much leſs that which is ſo great, as to fill heaven and earth; yea, *not to be contained in the heaven of heavens.*

Things are ſaid to be preſent, or in a place.

1. Circumſcriptive, as circumſcribed.—This belongs to things that have quantity, as bodies that are encompaſſed by that place wherein they are; and a body fills but one particular ſpace wherein it is, and the ſpace is commenſurate to every part of it, and every member hath a diſtinct place. The hand is not in the ſame particular ſpace that the foot or head is.

2. Definitive, which belongs to angels and ſpirits, which are ſaid to be in a point, yet ſo as that they cannot be ſaid to be in another at the ſame time.

3. Repletive, filling all places; this belongs only to God: as he is not meaſured by time, ſo he is not limited by place. A body or ſpirit, becauſe finite, fills but one ſpace; God, becauſe infinite, fills all, yet ſo as not to be contained in them, as wine and water is in a veſſel. He is from the height of the heavens to the bottom of the deeps,

in every point of the world, and in the whole circle of it, yet not limited by it, but beyond it. Now this hath been acknowledged by the wiſeſt in the world.

Some indeed had other notions of God. The more ignorant ſort of the Jews confined him to the temple: and God intimates, that they had ſuch a thought when he aſſerts his preſence in heaven and earth, in oppoſition to the temple they built as his houſe, and the place of his reſt. And the idolaters among them, thought their gods might be at a diſtance from them, which Elias intimates in the ſcoff he puts upon them, *cry aloud, for he is a God*, meaning Baal, *either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is in a journey*; and they follow his advice, and cry louder; whereby it is evident, they looked not on it as a mock, but as a truth. And the Syrians called the God of Iſrael, the God of the hills, as though his preſence were fixed there, and not in the vallies; and their own gods in the vallies, and not in the mountains: they fanſied every God to have a particular dominion, and preſence in one place, and not in another; and bounded the territories of their gods, as they did thoſe of their princes. And ſome thought him tied to, and ſhut up in their temples and groves wherein they worſhipped him. Some of them thought God to be confined to heaven, and therefore ſacrificed upon the higheſt mountains, that the ſteam might aſcend nearer heaven, and their praiſes be heard better in thoſe places which were neareſt to the habitation of God. But the wiſer Jews acknowledged it; and therefore called God PLACE, whereby they denote his immenſity; he was not contained in any place, every part of the world ſubſiſts by him: he was a place to himſelf, greater than any thing made by him. And the wiſer heathens acknowledged it alſo.

One calls God a mind paſſing through the univerſal nature of things; another, that he was an infinite

nite and immenſe air; another, that it is as natural to think God is every where, as to think that God is: hence they called God the ſoul of the world; that as the ſoul is in every part of the body, to quicken it, ſo is God in every part of the world, to ſupport it.

And there are ſome reſemblances of this in the world, though no creature can fully reſemble God in any one perfection; for then it would not be a creature, but God. But air and light are ſome weak reſemblances of it: air is in all the ſpaces of the world, in the pores of all bodies, in the bowels of the earth, and extends itſelf from the loweſt earth, to the higheſt regions; and the heavens themſelves are probably nothing elſe but a refined kind of air; and light diffuſeth itſelf through the whole air, and every part of it is truly light, as every part of the air is truly air; and though they ſeem to be mingled together, yet they are diſtinct things, and not of the ſame eſſence; ſo is the eſſence of God in the whole world, not by diffuſion, as air or light; not mixed with any creature, but remaining diſtinct from the eſſence of any created being. Now when this hath been owned by men inſtructed only in the ſchool of nature, it is a greater ſhame to any acquainted with the ſcripture to deny it. For the underſtanding of this, there ſhall be ſome propoſitions premiſed in general.

1. This is negatively to be underſtood.—Our knowledge of God is moſt by withdrawing from him, or denying to him in our conceptions, any weakneſſes or imperfections in the creature. As the infiniteneſs of God, is a denial of limitation of being, ſo immenſity or omnipreſence is a denial of limitation of place: and when we ſay, God is *totus* in every place, we muſt underſtand it thus, that he is not every where by parts, as bodies are, as air and light are; he is every where, *i. e.* his nature

nature hath no bounds; he is not tied to any place, as the creature is, who when he is preſent in one place, is abſent from another. As no place can be without God, ſo no place can compaſs and contain him.

2. There is an influential omnipreſence of God univerſal with all creatures. He is preſent with all things by his authority, becauſe all things are ſubject to him: by his power, becauſe all things are ſuſtained by him: by his knowledge, becauſe all things are naked before him. He is preſent in the world, as a king in all parts of his kingdom regally preſent: providentially preſent with all, ſince his care extends to the meaneſt of his creatures. His power reacheth all, and his knowledge pierceth all.

As every thing in the world was created by God, ſo every thing in the world is preſerved by God; and ſince preſervation is not wholly diſtinct from creation, it is neceſſary God ſhould be preſent with every thing while he preſerves it, as well as preſent with it when he created it. *Thou preſerveſt man and beaſt. He upholds all things by the word of his power.* There is a virtue ſuſtaining every creature, that it may not fall back into that nothing from whence it was elevated by the power of God. All thoſe natural virtues we call the principles of operation, are fountains ſpringing from his goodneſs and power; all things are acted and managed by him, as well as preſerved by him; and in this ſenſe, God is preſent with all creatures; for whatſoever acts another, is preſent with that which it acts, by ſending forth ſome virtue and influence, whereby it acts. If free agents do not only live, but *move in him, and by him,* much more are the motions of other natural agents, by a virtue communicated to them, and upheld in them in the time of their acting: this virtual preſence of God, is evident to our ſenſe, a preſence we feel; his eſſential preſence

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is evident in our reaſon: this influential preſence may be compared to that of the ſun, which though at ſo great a diſtance from the earth, is preſent in the air and earth by its light, and within the earth by its influence, in concocting thoſe metals which are in the bowels of it, without being ſubſtantially either of them. God is thus ſo intimate with every creature, that there is not the leaſt particle of any creature, but the marks of his power and goodneſs are ſeen in it, and his goodneſs doth attend them and is more ſwift in his effluxes, than the breakings out of light from the ſun, which yet are more ſwift than can be declared; but to ſay he is in the world only by his virtue, is to acknowledge only the effects of his power and wiſdom in the world, that his eye ſees all, his arm ſupports all, his goodneſs nouriſheth all, but himſelf and his eſſence at a diſtance from them: and ſo the ſoul of man, according to its meaſure, would have in ſome kind a more excellent manner of preſence in the body, than God according to the infiniteneſs of his being with his creatures; for that doth not only communicate life to the body, but is actually preſent with it, and ſpreads its whole eſſence through the body and every member of it: all grant, that God is efficaciouſly in every creek of the world; but ſome ſay, he is only ſubſtantially in heaven.

Limited to ſuch ſubjects that are capacitated for this or that kind of preſence.—Yet it is an omnipreſence, becauſe it is a preſence in all the ſubjects capacitated for it; thus there is a ſpecial providential preſence of God with ſome, in aſſiſting them when he ſets them on work as his inſtruments for ſome ſpecial ſervice in the world: as with Cyrus, *I will go before thee,* and with Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander, whom he protected and directed to execute his counſels in the world; ſuch a preſence Judas, and others that ſhall not enjoy his glorious preſence, had in the working of miracles in the world:

world: beſides as there is an effective preſence of God with all creatures, becauſe he produced them, and preſerves them; ſo there is an objective preſence of God with rational creatures, becauſe he offers himſelf to them, to be known and loved by them: he is near to wicked men in the offers of his grace, *call ye upon him while he is near*; beſides, there is a gracious preſence of God with his people in whom he dwells, and makes his abode, as in a temple conſecrated to him by the graces of the Spirit. *We will come, i. e.* the Father and the Son, and make our abode with him. He is preſent with all by the preſence of his divinity, but only in his ſaints by a preſence of a gracious efficacy; he walks in the midſt of the golden candleſticks, and hath dignified the congregation of his people with the title of Jehovah Shammah, *The Lord is there:* In Salem *is his tabernacle and his dwelling place in Sion.* As he filled the tabernacle, ſo he doth the church with the ſigns of his preſence; this is not the preſence wherewith he fills heaven and earth. His Spirit is not beſtowed upon all, to reſide in their hearts, enlighten their minds, and bedew them with refreſhing comforts: when the apoſtle ſpeaks of God's being *above all*, and *through all*; above all in his majeſty, through all in his providence; he doth not appropriate that, as he doth what follows, and *in you all*; in you all by a ſpecial grace; as God was ſpecially preſent with Chriſt by the grace of union, ſo he is ſpecially preſent with his people by the grace of regeneration. So there are ſeveral manifeſtations of his preſence: he hath a preſence of glory in heaven, whereby he comforts the ſaints; a preſence of wrath in hell, whereby he torments the damned; in heaven, he is a God ſpreading his beams of light; in hell, a God diſtributing his ſtrokes of juſtice; by the one he fills heaven

heaven, by the other he fills hell; by his providence and eſſence he fills both heaven and earth.

There is an eſſential preſence of God in the world.—He is not only every where, by his power upholding the creatures, by his wiſdom underſtanding them, but by his eſſence containing them. That any thing is eſſentially preſent any where, it hath from God; God is therefore much more preſent every where, for he cannot give that which he hath not.

He is eſſentially preſent in all places.—It is as reaſonable to think the eſſence of God to be every where, as to be always; immenſity is as rational as eternity; that indiviſible eſſence which reaches through all times, may as well reach through all places: it is more excellent to be always, than to be every where; for to be always in duration is intrinſical; to be every where is extrinſick; if the greater belongs to God, why not the leſs? as all times are a moment to his eternity, ſo all places are as a point to his eſſence; as he is larger than all time, ſo he is vaſter than all place: the nations of the world are to him *as the duſt of the ballance, or drop of a bucket. The nations are accounted as the ſmall duſt*; the eſſence of God may well be thought to be preſent every where with that which is no more than a grain of duſt to him, and in all thoſe iſles, which if put together, are a very little thing in his hand: therefore ſaith a learned Jew, if a man were ſet in the higheſt heavens, he would not be nearer to the eſſence of God than if he were in the center of the earth. Why may not the preſence of God in the world be as noble as that of the ſoul in the body, which is generally granted to be eſſentially in every part of the body of man, which is but a little world, and animates every member by its actual preſence, though it exerts not the ſame operation in every part? the world is leſs to the creator, than the

body

body to the ſoul; and needs more the preſence of God, than the body needs the preſence of the ſoul. That glorious body of the ſun viſits every part of the habitable earth in twenty-four hours by its beams; which reach the troughs of the loweſt valleys, as well as the pinacles of the higheſt mountains; muſt we not acknowledge in the creator of this an infinite greater proportion of preſence? is it not as eaſy with the eſſence of God to overſpread the whole body of heaven and earth, as it is for the ſun to pierce and diffuſe itſelf through the whole air between it and the earth, and ſend up its light alſo as far to the regions above? do we not ſee ſomething like in ſounds and voices? Is not the ſame ſound of a trumpet, or any other muſical inſtrument, at the firſt breaking out of a blaſt, in ſeveral places within ſuch a compaſs, at the ſame time? Doth not every ear that hears it, receive alike the whole ſound of it? And fragrant odors ſcented in ſeveral places at the ſame time, in the ſame manner; and the organ proper for ſmelling takes in the ſame in every perſon within the compaſs of it: how far is the noiſe of thunder heard alike to every ear, in places ſomething diſtant from one another? and do we daily find ſuch a manner of preſence in thoſe things of ſo low a concern, and not imagine a kind of preſence of God greater than all thoſe? Is the ſound of thunder, the voice of God, as it is called, every where in ſuch a compaſs, and ſhall not the eſſence of an infinite God be much more every where? thoſe that would confine the eſſence of God only to heaven, and exclude it from the earth, run into great inconveniencies. It may be demanded, whether he be in one part of the heavens, or in the whole vaſt body of them? if in one part of them, his eſſence is bounded; if he moves from that part, he is mutable, for he changes a place wherein he was, for another wherein he was not. If he be

be always fixed in one part of the heavens ſuch a notion would render him little better than a living ſtatue: if he be in the whole heaven, why cannot his eſſence poſſeſs a greater ſpace than the whole heavens which are ſo vaſt? how comes he to be confined within the compaſs of that, ſince the whole heaven compaſſeth the earth? If he be in the whole heaven, he is in places farther diſtant one from another, than any part of the earth can be from the heavens; ſince the earth is like a center in the midſt of a circle, it muſt be nearer to every part of the circle, than ſome parts of the circle can be to one another: if therefore his eſſence poſſeſſes the whole heavens, no reaſon can be rendered why he doth not alſo poſſeſs the earth, ſince alſo the earth is but a little point in compariſon of the vaſtneſs of the heavens; if therefore he be in every part of the heavens, why not in every part of the earth?

The ſcripture is plain, *Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit? Or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I aſcend up to heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea, even there ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand ſhall uphold me.* If he be in heaven, earth, hell, and ſea, he fills all places with his preſence; his preſence is here aſſerted in places the moſt diſtant from one another; all the places then between heaven and earth are poſſeſſed by his preſence: It is not meant of his knowledge, for that the pſalmiſt had ſpoken of before, *Thou underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off, thou art acquainted with all my ways.* Beſides thou art there, not thy wiſdom or knowledge; but thou, in thy eſſence, not only thy virtue. For having before ſpoken of his omniſcience, he proves that ſuch knowledge could not be in God, unleſs he were preſent in his eſſence in all places, ſo as to be

be excluded from none: he fills the depths of hell, the extenſion of the earth, and the heights of the heavens. When the ſcripture mentions the power of God only, it expreſſeth it by hand or arm; but when it mentions the Spirit of God, and doth not intend the third perſon in the trinity, it ſignifies the nature and eſſence of God: and ſo here, when he ſaith, whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit? he adds exegetically, Whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence, or face? and the face of God in ſcripture ſignifies the eſſence of God; *Thou canst not ſee my face*, and *my face ſhall not be ſeen*; the effects of his power, wiſdom, providence, are ſeen, which are his back parts, but not his face; the effects of his power and wiſdom are ſeen in the world, but his eſſence is inviſible; and this the pſalmiſt elegantly expreſſeth. Had I wings endued with as much quickneſs as the firſt dawnings of the morning light, or the firſt darts of any ſun beam that ſpreads itſelf through the hemiſphere, and paſſes many miles in as ſhort a ſpace as I can think a thought, I ſhould find thy preſence in all places before me, and could not fly out of the infinite compaſs of thy eſſence.

He is eſſentially preſent with all creatures.—If he be in all places, it follows that he is with all creatures in thoſe places; as he is in heaven, ſo he is with all angels; as he is in hell, ſo is he with all devils; as he is in earth and ſea, he is with all creatures inhabiting thoſe elements: as his eſſential preſence was the ground of the firſt being of things by creation, ſo it is the ground of the continued being of things by conſervation. As his eſſential preſence was the original, ſo it is the ſupport of the exiſtence of all the creatures. What are all thoſe magnificent expreſſions of his creative virtue, but teſtimonies of his eſſential preſence at the laying the foundation of the world? *when he meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meeted out*

out heaven with the ſpan, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance. He ſets forth the power and majeſty of God in the creation and preſervation of things, and every expreſſion teſtifies his preſence with them: the waters that were upon the face of the earth at firſt, were no more than a drop in the palm of a man's hand, which in every part is touched by his hand. And thus he is equally preſent with the blackeſt devils, as well as the brighteſt angels; with the loweſt duſt, as well as with the moſt ſparkling ſun. He is equally preſent with the damned and the bleſſed, as he is an infinite being, but not in regard of his goodneſs and grace. He is equally preſent with the good and the bad, with the ſcoffing Athenians, as well as the believing apoſtles, in regard of his eſſence, but not in regard of the breathing of his divine virtues upon them to make them like himſelf: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being:* The apoſtle includes all; he tells them they ſhould ſeek the Lord; the Lord that they were to ſeek, is God eſſentially conſidered: we are indeed to ſeek the perfections of God, that glitter in his works, but to the end that they ſhould direct us to the ſeeking of God himſelf in his own nature and eſſence: and therefore what follows, in him we live, is to be underſtood not of his power and goodneſs, perfections of his nature, diſtinguiſhed according to our manner of conception, from his eſſence; but of the eſſential preſence of God with his creatures. If he had meant it of his efficacy in preſerving us, it had not been any proof of his nearneſs to us. Who would go about to prove the body or ſubſtance of the ſun to be near us becauſe it doth warm and enlighten us, when our ſenſe evi denceth the diſtance of it? we live in the beams of the ſun, but we cannot be ſaid to live in the ſun,

which is ſo far diſtant from us. The expreſſion ſeems to be more emphatical than to intend any leſs than his eſſential preſence: but we live in him not only as the efficient cauſe of our life, but as the foundation ſuſtaining our lives and motions, as if he were like air, diffuſed round about us. And we move in him, as Auſtin ſaith, as a ſpunge in the ſea, not containing him, but being contained by him: he compaſſeth all, is encompaſſed by none; he fills all, is comprehended by none. The creator contains the world, the world contains not the creator: as the hollow of the hand contains the water, the water in the hollow of the hand contains not the hand; and therefore ſome have choſe to ſay rather, that the world is in God, it lives and moves in him, than that God is in the world: if all things thus live and move in him, then he is preſent with every thing that hath life, and motion; and as long as the devils and damned have life, and motion, and being, ſo long is he with them; for whatſoever lives and moves, lives and moves in him.

But now this eſſential preſence is without any mixture.—I fill heaven and earth; not, I am mixed with heaven and earth; his eſſence is not mixed with the creatures; it remains entire in itſelf. The ſpunge retains the nature of a ſpunge, though encompaſſed by the ſea, and moving in it; and the ſea ſtill retains its own nature. God is moſt ſimple; his eſſence therefore is not mixed with any thing. The light of the ſun is preſent with the air, but not mixed with it, it remains light, and the air remains air; the light of the ſun is diffuſed through all the hemiſphere, it pierceth all tranſparent bodies, it ſeems to mix itſelf with all things yet remains unmixed and undivided: the light remains light, and the air remains air; the air is not light though it be enlightened. Or take this ſimilitude; when many candles are lighted up in a room, the light is altogether, yet not mixed with one another; every

candle

candle hath a particular light belonging to it, which may be ſeparated in a moment, by removing one candle from another; but if they were mixed, they could not be ſeparated, at leaſt, ſo eaſily. God is not formally one with the world, or with any creature in the world by his preſence in it: nor can any creature in the world, no, not the ſoul of man, or an angel, come to be eſſentially one with God, though God be eſſentially preſent with it.

The eſſential preſence is without any diviſion of himſelf.—*I fill heaven and earth*, not part in heaven and part in earth; I fill one as well as the other: one part of his eſſence is not in one place, and another part of his eſſence in another place, he would then be changeable; for that part of his eſſence which were now in this place, he might alter it to another, and place that part of his eſſence which were in another place to this; but he is undivided every where. As his eternity is one indiviſible point, though in our conception we divide it into paſt, preſent, and to come. So the whole world is as a point to him, in regard of place as before was ſaid; it is as a ſmall duſt, and grain of duſt: it is impoſſible that one part of his eſſence can be ſeparated from another, for he is not a body, to have one part ſeparable from another. The light of the ſun cannot be cut into parts, it cannot be ſhut into any place and kept there, it is entire in every place; ſhall not God who gives the light that power, be much more preſent himſelf? whatſoever hath parts is finite, but God is infinite, therefore hath no parts of his eſſence. Beſides, if there were ſuch a diviſion of his being, he would not be the moſt ſimple and uncompounded being, but would be made up of various parts; he would not be a ſpirit, for parts are evidences of compoſition; and it could not be ſaid that God is here or there, but only a part of God here, and a part of God there.

But he fills heaven and earth, he is as much a God in the earth beneath as in heaven above; entirely in all places, not by ſcraps and fragments of his eſſence.

This eſſential preſence is not by multiplication. —For that which is infinite cannot multiply itſelf, or make itſelf more or greater than it was.

This eſſential preſence is not by extenſion or diffuſion.—As a piece of gold may be beaten out to cover a large compaſs of ground; no, if God ſhould create millions of worlds he would be in them all, not by ſtretching out his being, but by the infiniteneſs of his being; not by a new growth of his being, but by the ſame eſſence he had from eternity: upon the ſame reaſons mentioned before, his ſimplicity and indiviſibility.

But totally.—There is no ſpace, not the leaſt, wherein God is not wholly according to his eſſence, and wherein his whole ſubſtance doth not exiſt; not a part of heaven can be deſigned wherein the creator is not wholly; as he is in one part of heaven, he is in every part of heaven. Some kind of reſemblance we may have from the water of the ſea, which fills the great ſpace of the world, and is diffuſed through all; yet the eſſence of water is in every drop of water in the ſea, as much as the whole; and the ſame quality of water, though it comes ſhort in quantity; and why ſhall we not allow God a nobler way of preſence without diffuſion, as is in that? or take this reſemblance, ſince God likens himſelf to light in the ſcripture, *he covereth himſelf with light*; a chryſtal globe hung up in the air hath light all about it, all within it, every part is pierced by it; wherever you ſee the chryſtal you ſee the light; the light in one part of the chryſtal cannot be diſtinguiſhed from the light in the other part; and the whole eſſence of light is in every part; and ſhall not God be as much preſent with his creatures, as one creature can be with another?

another? God is totally every where by his own ſimple ſubſtance.

God is preſent beyond the world.—He is within and above all places, though places ſhould be infinite in number; as he was before and beyond all time, ſo he is above and beyond all place; being from eternity before any real time, he muſt alſo be without as well as within any real ſpace; if God were only confined to the world, he would be no more infinite in his eſſence than the world is in quantity: as a moment cannot be conceived from eternity, wherein God was not in being, ſo a ſpace cannot be conceived in the mind of man, wherein God is not preſent; he is not contained in the world nor in the heavens. *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.* Solomon wonders that God ſhould appoint a temple to be erected to him upon the earth, when he is not contained in the vaſt circuit of the heavens; his eſſence is not ſtraitened in the limits of any created work, he is not contained in the heavens, *i. e.* in the manner that he is there; but he is there in his eſſence, and therefore cannot be contained there in his eſſence. If it ſhould be meant only of his power and providence, it would conclude alſo for his eſſence; if his power and providence were infinite, his eſſence muſt be ſo too; for the infiniteneſs of his eſſence is the ground of the infiniteneſs of his power: it can never enter into any thought, that a finite eſſence can have an infinite power, and an infinite power can be without an infinite eſſence: it cannot be meant of his providence, as if Solomon ſhould ſay, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thy providence; for naming the heaven of heavens, that which encircles and bounds the other parts of the world, he could not ſuppoſe a providence to be exerciſed where there was no object to exerciſe it about; as no creature is mentioned to be beyond the uttermoſt

heaven, which he calls here the heaven of heavens. Beſides, to underſtand it of his providence, doth not conſiſt with Solomon's admiration; he wonders that God, who hath ſo immenſe an eſſence, ſhould dwell in a temple made with hands; he could not ſo much wonder at his providence in thoſe things that immediately concern his worſhip. Solomon plainly aſſerts this of God, that he was ſo far from being bounded within the rich wall of the temple, which with ſo much coſt he had framed for the glory of his name, that the richer palace of the heaven of heavens could not contain him; it is true, it could not contain his power and wiſdom, becauſe his wiſdom could contrive other kind of worlds, and his power erect them: but doth the meaning of this wiſe king reach no farther than this? will the power and wiſdom of God reſide on the earth? He was too wiſe to aſk ſuch a queſtion, ſince every object that his eyes met in the world reſolved him, that the wiſdom and power of God dwelt upon the earth, and glittered in every thing he had created; and reaſon would aſſure him, that the power that had framed the world, was able to frame many more: but Solomom conſidering the immenſity of God's eſſence, wonders that God ſhould order a houſe to be built for him, as if he wanted roofs and coverings, and habitation, as bodily creatures do. Will God indeed dwell in a temple, who hath an eſſence ſo immenſe as cannot be contained in the heaven of heavens? it is not the heaven of heavens that can contain him, his ſubſtance. Here he aſſerts the immenſity of his eſſence, and his preſence not only in the heaven, but beyond the heavens; he that is not contained in the heavens, as a man is in a chamber, is without, and above, and beyond the heavens; it is not ſaid they do not contain him, but it is impoſſible they ſhould contain him; they cannot contain him. It is impoſſible then but that he ſhould be above them; he that is without the compaſs

compaſs of the world, is not bounded by the limits of the world; as his power is not limitted by the things he hath made, but can create innumerable worlds, ſo can his eſſence be in innumerable ſpaces; for as he hath power enough to make more worlds, ſo he hath eſſence enough to fill them, and therefore cannot be confined to what he hath already created; innumerable worlds cannot be a ſufficient place to contain God, he can only be a ſufficient place to himſelf; he that was before the world and place, and all things, was to himſelf a world, a place, and every thing: he is really out of the world in himſelf, as he was in himſelf before the creation of the world: as becauſe God was before the foundation of the world, we conclude his eternity; ſo becauſe he is without the bounds of the world, we conclude his immenſity, and from thence his omnipreſence. The world cannot be ſaid to contain him, ſince it was created by him; it cannot contain him now, who was contained by nothing before the world was: as there was no place to contain him before the world was, there can be no place to contain him ſince the world was.

God might create more worlds circular and round as this, and thoſe could not be ſo contiguous, but ſome ſpaces would be left between; as take three round balls, lay them as cloſe as you can to one another, there will be ſome ſpaces between; none would ſay but God would be in thoſe ſpaces, as well as in the world he had created, though there were nothing real and poſitive in thoſe ſpaces; why ſhould we then exclude God from thoſe imaginary ſpaces without the world? God might alſo create many worlds, and ſeparate them by diſtances, that they might not touch one another, but be at a great diſtance from one another; and would not God fill them as well as he doth this? if ſo, he muſt alſo fill the ſpaces between them: for if he were in all thoſe worlds, and not in the ſpaces between thoſe worlds,

his eſſence would be divided: there would be gaps in it, his eſſence would be cut into parts, and the diſtance between every part of his eſſence would be as great as the ſpace between each world: the eſſence of God may be conceived then well enough to be in all thoſe infinite ſpaces where he can erect new worlds.

I ſhall give one place more to prove both theſe propoſitions, viz. that God is eſſentially in every part of the world, and eſſentially above our's without the world.

The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-ſtool. He is eſſentially in every part of the world; he is in heaven and earth at the ſame time; at the ſame time, as a man is upon his throne and his footſtool. God deſcribes himſelf in a human ſhape, accommodated to our capacity; as if he had his head in heaven and his feet on earth; doth not his eſſence then fill all intermediate ſpaces between heaven and earth? as when the head of a man is in the upper part of a room, and his feet upon the floor, his body fills up the ſpace between the head and his feet; this is meant of the eſſence of God; it is a ſimilitude drawn from kings ſitting upon the throne, and not their power and authority, but the feet of their perſons are ſupported by the footſtool; ſo here it is not meant only of the perfections of God, but the eſſence of God. Beſides, God ſeems to tax them with an erroneous conceit they had, as though his eſſence were in the temple, and not in any part of the world; therefore God makes an oppoſition between heaven and earth, and the temple; *where is the houſe that you built unto me? and where is the place of my reſt?* Had he underſtood it only of his providence, it had not been any thing againſt their miſtake; for they granted his providence to be not only in the temple, but in all parts of the world: *Where is the houſe that you*

built

built to me? to me, not to my power or providence, but think to include me within thoſe walls.

Again, it ſhews God to be above the heavens, if the heavens be his throne; he ſits upon them, and is above them as kings are above the thrones on which they ſit; ſo it cannot be meant of his providence, becauſe no creature being without the ſphere of the heavens, there is nothing of the power and the providence of God viſible there; for there is nothing for him to employ his providence about. For providence ſuppoſeth a creature in actual being; it muſt be therefore meant of his eſſence, which is above the world, and in the world.

And the like proof you may ſee, Job xi. 7. 8. *It is as high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea.* Where he intends the unſearchableneſs of God's wiſdom, but proves it by the infiniteneſs of his eſſence, *he is the height of the heavens,* he is the top of all the heavens; ſo that when you have begun at the loweſt part, and traced him through all the creatures, you will find his eſſence filling all the creatures to be at the top of the world, and infinitely beyond it.

This is the property of God, incommunicable to any creature.—As no creature can be eternal and immutable, ſo no creature can be immenſe, becauſe it cannot be infinite; nothing can be of an infinite nature, and therefore nothing of an immenſe preſence but God: it cannot be communicated to the human nature of Chriſt, though in union with the divine; ſome indeed argue, that Chriſt, in regard of his human nature, is every where, becauſe he ſits at the right hand of God, and the right hand of God is every where: his ſitting at the right hand of God ſignifies his exaltation, and cannot with any reaſon be extended to ſuch a kind of arguing;

arguing; the hearts of kings are in the hand of God; are the heart of kings every where, becauſe God's hand is every where? The ſouls of the righteous are in the hand of God, is the ſoul therefore of every righteous man every where in the world? The right hand of God is from eternity, is the humanity of Chriſt therefore from eternity, becauſe it ſits at the right hand of God? The right hand of God made the world, did the humanity of Chriſt therefore make heaven and earth? the humanity of Chriſt muſt then be confounded with his divinity; be the ſame with it, not united to it. All creatures are diſtinct from their creator, and cannot inherit the properties eſſential to his nature; as eternity, immenſity, immutability, omnipreſence, omniſcience; no angel, no ſoul, no creature can be in all places at once; before they can be ſo, they muſt be immenſe, and ſo muſt ceaſe to be creatures and commence God; this is impoſſible.

Second, To prove God's eſſential preſence.

1. Becauſe he is infinite.—As he is infinite, he is every where; as he is ſimple, his whole eſſence is every where; for, in regard of his infiniteneſs, he hath no bounds; in regard of his ſimplicity, he hath no parts: and therefore thoſe that deny God's omnipreſence, though they pretend to own him infinite, muſt really conceive him finite.

God is infinite in his perfections.—None can ſet bounds to terminate the greatneſs and excellency of God. *His greatneſs is unſearchable*, there is no end, no limitation; what hath no end is infinite; his power is infinite, *which doth great things and unſearchable*, no end of thoſe things he is able to do; his wiſdom infinite. He underſtands all things paſt, preſent, and to come; what is already made, what is poſſible to be made; his duration infinite. *The number of his years cannot be ſearched out.* To make a finite thing of nothing, is an argument of an infinite virtue; infinite power can only extract

ſomething

ſomething out of the barren womb of nothing, but all things were drawn forth by the word of God, the heavens and all the hoſt of them; the ſun, moon, ſtars, the rich embelliſhments of the world appeared in being, *at the breath of his mouth*, the Author therefore muſt be infinite: and ſince nothing is the cauſe of God, or of his perfections in him; ſince he derives not his being, or the leaſt ſpark of his glorious nature from any thing without him; he cannot be limited in any part of his nature, by any thing without him; and indeed the infiniteneſs of his power, and his other perfections, is aſſerted by the prophet, when he tells us that *the nations are as a drop of a bucket, or the duſt of the balance, and leſs than nothing and vanity*, they are all ſo in regard of his power, wiſdom, &c. Conceive what a little thing a grain of duſt or ſand is to all the duſt that may be made by the rubbiſh of a houſe; what a little thing the heap of the rubbiſh of a houſe is to the vaſt heap of the rubbiſh of a whole city, ſuch a one as London; how little that alſo would be to the duſt of a whole empire; how inconſiderable that alſo to the duſt of one quarter of the world, Europe or Aſia; how much leſs that ſtill to the duſt of the whole world; the whole world is compoſed of an inconceivable number of atoms, and the ſea of an inconceivable number of drops; now what a little grain of duſt is in compariſon of the duſt of the whole world; a drop of water from the ſea, to all the drops remaining in the ſea, that is, the whole world to God. Conceive it ſtill leſs, a mere nothing, yet is it all leſs than this, in compariſon of God; there can be nothing more magnificently expreſſive of the infiniteneſs of God to a human conception, than this expreſſion of God himſelf in the prophet.

In the perfection of a creature, ſomething ſtill may be thought greater to be added to it; but God containing all perfections in himſelf formally, if they be mere perfections; and eminently, if they

be

be but perfections in the creature, mixed with imperfection; nothing can be thought greater, and therefore every one of them is infinite.

If his perfections be infinite, his eſſence muſt be ſo.—How God can have infinite perfections, and a finite eſſence, is inconceivable by a human or angelical underſtanding; an infinite power, an infinite wiſdom, an infinite duration, muſt needs ſpeak an infinite eſſence; ſince the infiniteneſs of his attributes is grounded upon the infiniteneſs of his eſſence: to own infinite perfections in a finite ſubject, is contradictory. The manner of acting by his power, and knowing by his wiſdom, cannnot exceed the manner of being by his eſſence. His perfections flow from his eſſence, and the principle muſt be of the ſame rank with what flows from it; and if we conceive his eſſence to be the cauſe of his perfections, it is utterly impoſſible that an infinite effect ſhould ariſe from a finite cauſe; but indeed his perfections are his eſſence, for though we conceive the eſſence of God as the ſubject, and the attributes of God as faculties and qualities in that ſubject, according to our weak model, who cannot conceive of an infinite God without ſome manner of likeneſs to ourſelves; who find underſtanding and will, and power in us diſtinct from our ſubſtance; yet truly and really there is no diſtinction between his eſſence and attributes; one is inſeparable from the other; his power and wiſdom are his eſſence; and therefore to maintain God infinite in the one, and finite in the other, is to make a monſtrous God, and have an unreaſonable notion of the deity; for there would be the greateſt diſproportion in his nature, ſince there is no greater diſproportion can poſſibly be between one thing and another, than there is between finite and infinite: God muſt not only then be compounded, but have parts of the greateſt diſtance from one another in nature; but God being the moſt ſimple being, without

without the leaſt compoſition, both muſt be equally infinite: if then his eſſence be not infinite, his power and wiſdom cannot be infinite, which is both againſt ſcripture and reaſon.

Again, how ſhould his eſſence be finite, and his perfections be infinite; ſince nothing out of himſelf gave them either the one or the other?

Again, either the eſſence can be infinite, or it cannot; if it cannot, there muſt be ſome cauſe of that impoſſibility; that can be nothing without him; becauſe nothing without him can be as powerful as himſelf, much leſs too powerful for him; nothing within him can be an enemy to his higheſt perfection; ſince he is neceſſarily what he is, he muſt neceſſarily be the moſt perfect being, and therefore neceſſarily infinite; ſince to be ſomething infinitely, is a greater perfection than to be ſomething finitely; if he can be infinite, he is infinite; otherwiſe he could be greater than he is, and ſo more bleſſed and more perfect than he is, which is impoſſible; for being the moſt perfect being, to whom nothing can be added, he muſt needs be infinite.

If therefore God have an infinite eſſence, he hath an infinite preſence.—An infinite eſſence cannot be contained in a finite place; as thoſe things which are finite have a bounded ſpace, wherein they are, ſo that which is infinite hath an unbounded ſpace; for as finiteneſs ſpeaks limitedneſs; ſo infiniteneſs ſpeaks unboundedneſs; and if we grant to God an infinite duration, there is no difficulty in acknowledging an infinite preſence: indeed the infiniteneſs of God is a property belonging to him in regard of time and place; he is bounded by no place, and limited to no time.

Again, infinite eſſence may as well be every where, as infinite power reach every thing; it may as well be preſent with every being, as infinite power in its working may be preſent with nothing to bring it into being. Where God works by his

power

power he is preſent in his eſſence; becauſe his power and his eſſence cannot be ſeparated: and therefore his power, wiſdom, goodneſs, cannot be any where, where is eſſence is not: his eſſence cannot be ſevered from his power, nor his power from his eſſence; for the power of God is nothing but God acting, and the wiſdom of God nothing, but God knowing. As the power of God is always, ſo is his eſſence; as the power of God is every where, ſo is his eſſence; whatſoever God is, he is always, and every where: to confine him to a place, is to meaſure his eſſence; as to confine his actions, is to limit his power; his eſſence being no leſs infinite than his power and his wiſdom, can be no more bounded than his power and wiſdom; but they are not ſeparable from his eſſence, yea they are his eſſence; if God did not fill the whole world, he would be determined to ſome place, and excluded from others; and ſo his ſubſtance would have bounds and limits, and then ſomething might be conceived greater than God; for we may conceive that a creature may be made by God of ſo vaſt a greatneſs as to fill the whole world; for the power of God is able to make a body that ſhould take up the whole ſpace between heaven and earth, and reach to every corner of it; but nothing can be conceived by any creature greater than God; he exceeds all things, and is exceeded by none; God cannot therefore be included in heaven, nor included in the earth; cannot be contained in either of them; for if we ſhould imagine them vaſter than they are, yet ſtill they would be finite; and if his eſſence were contained in them, it could be no more infinite than the world which contains it; as water is not of a larger compaſs than the veſſel which contains it. If the eſſence of God were limited either in the heavens or earth, it muſt needs be finite, as the heaven and earth are; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite; God therefore cannot

not be contained in them: if there were an infinite body, that muſt be every where; certainly then an infinite ſpirit muſt be every where; unleſs we will account him finite, we can render no reaſon why he ſhould not be in one creature as well as in another; if he be in heaven, which is his creature, why can he not be in the earth, which is as well his creature as the heaven.

2. Becauſe of the continual operation of God in the world.—This was one reaſon made the heathen believe that there was an infinite ſpirit in the vaſt body of the world, acting in every thing, and producing thoſe admirable motions which we ſee every where in nature: that cauſe which acts in the moſt perfect manner, is alſo in the moſt perfect manner preſent with its effects.

God preſerves all, and therefore is in all; the apoſtle thought it a good induction; *He is not far from us: for in him we live.* For being as much as becauſe, ſhews that from his operation he concluded his real preſence with all: it is not his virtue is not far from every one of us; but He, his ſubſtance, himſelf; for none that acknowledge a God, will deny the abſence of the virtue of God from any part of the world. He works in every thing, every thing lives and works in him; therefore he is preſent with all: or rather if things live, they are in God, who gives them life. If things live, God is in them, and gives them life: if things move, God is in them, and gives them motion: if things have any being, God is in them, and gives them being; if God withdraws himſelf, they preſently loſe their being; and therefore ſome have compared the creature to the impreſſion of a ſeal upon the water, that cannot be preſerved but by the preſence of the ſeal. As his preſence was actual with what he created, ſo his preſence is actual with what he preſerves, ſince creation and preſervation do ſo little differ; if God creates things by

by his eſſential preſence, by the ſame he ſupports them; if his ſubſtance cannot be disjoined from his preſerving power, his power and wiſdom cannot be ſeparated from his eſſence; where there are the marks of the one, there is the preſence of the other; for it is by his eſſence that he is powerful and wiſe; no man can diſtinguiſh the one from the other in a ſimple being: God doth not preſerve and act things by a virtue diffuſed from him. It may be demanded whether that virtue be diſtinct from God? if it be not, it is then the eſſence of God; if it be diſtinct, it is a creature, and then it may be aſked how that virtue which preſerves other things, is preſerved itſelf? it muſt be ultimately reſolved into the eſſence of God, or elſe there muſt be a running *in infinitum:* or elſe, is that virtue of God a ſubſtance or not? is it endued with underſtanding or not? If it hath underſtanding, how doth it differ from God? If it wants underſtanding, can any imagine that the ſupport of the world, the guidance of all creatures, the wonders of nature can be wrought, preſerved, managed by a virtue that hath nothing of underſtanding in it? if it be not a ſubſtance, it can much leſs be able to produce ſuch excellent operations, as the preſerving all the kinds of things in the world, and ordering them to perform ſuch excellent ends; this virtue is therefore God himſelf, the infinite power and wiſdom of God; and therefore whereſoever the effects of theſe are ſeen in the world, God is eſſentially preſent; ſome creatures indeed act at a diſtance by a virtue diffuſed; but ſuch a manner of acting comes from a limitedneſs of nature, that ſuch a nature cannnot be every where preſent, and extend its ſubſtance to all parts; to act by a virtue, ſpeaks the ſubject finite, and it is a part of indigence: kings act in their kingdoms by miniſters and meſſengers, becauſe they cannot act otherwiſe; but God being infinitely perfect, *works all things in all* immediately; illumination, ſanctification,

ſanctification, grace, &c. are the immediate works of God in the heart, and immediate agents are preſent with what they do; it is an argument of the greater perfection of a being, to know things immediately, which are done in ſeveral places, than to know them at the ſecond hand by inſtruments: it is no leſs a perfection to be every where, rather than to be tied to one place of action; and to act in other places by inſtruments, for want of a power to act immediately itſelf: God indeed acts by means and ſecond cauſes in his providential diſpenſations in the world, but this is not out of any defect of power to work all immediately himſelf; but he thereby accommodates his way of acting to the nature of the creature, and the order of things which he hath ſettled in the world; and when he works by means, he acts with thoſe means, in thoſe means, ſuſtains their faculties and virtues in them, concurs with them by his power; ſo that God's acting by means, doth rather ſtrengthen his eſſential preſence than weaken it; ſince there is a neceſſary dependance of the creatures upon the creator in their being and acting; and what they are, they are by the power of God; what they act, they act in the power of God, concurring with them; they have their motion in him as well as their being; and where the power of God is, his eſſence is, becauſe they are inſeparable; and ſo this omnipreſence ariſeth from the ſimplicity of the nature of God; the more vaſt any thing is, the leſs confined. All that will acknowledge God ſo great, as to be able to work all things by his will, without an eſſential preſence, cannot imagine him upon the ſame reaſon, ſo little as to be contained in, and bounded by any place.

Thirdly, Becauſe of his ſupreme perfection.

No perfection is wanting to God; but an unbounded eſſence is a perfection; a limited one is an imperfection. Though it be a perfection in a man

to be wiſe, yet it is an imperfection that his wiſdom cannot rule all the things that concern him; though it be a perfection to be preſent in a place where his affairs lie, yet it is his imperfection that he cannot be preſent every where, in the midſt of all his concerns; if any man could be ſo, it would be univerſally owned as a prime perfection in him above others; is that which would be a perfection in man, to be denied to God? as that which hath life, is more perfect than that which hath not life; and that which hath ſenſe is more perfect than that which hath only life, as the plants have; and what hath reaſon, is more perfect than that which hath only life and ſenſe, as the beaſts have; ſo what is every where is more perfect than that which is bounded in ſome narrow confines; if a power of motion be more excellent than to be bedrid; and ſwiftneſs in a creature, be a more excellent endowment than to be ſlow and ſnail like; then to be every where without motion, is inconceivably a greater excellency than to be every where ſucceſſively by motion. God ſets forth his readineſs to help his people and puniſh his enemies; or his omnipreſence, by ſwiftneſs, or *flying upon the wings of the wind:* the wind is in every part of the air, where it blows; it cannot be ſaid that it is in this or that point of the air where you feel it, ſo as to exclude it from another part of the air where you are not; it ſeems to poſſeſs all at once.

If the divine eſſence had any bounds of place, it would be imperfect, as well as if it had bounds of time; where any thing hath limitation, it hath ſome defect in being; and therefore if God were confined and concluded, he would be as good as nothing in regard of infiniteneſs: whence ſhould this reſtraint ariſe? there is no power above him to reſtrain him to a certain ſpace; if ſo, then he would not be God, but that power which reſtrained him would be God: not from his own nature, for the

the being every where, implies no contradiction to his nature; if his own nature determined him to a certain place, then if he removed from that place, he would act againſt his nature; to conceive any ſuch thing of God, is highly abſurd. It cannot be thought God ſhould voluntarily impoſe any ſuch reſtraint or confinement upon himſelf; this would be to deny himſelf a perfection he might have; if God have not this perfection, it is either becauſe it is inconſiſtent with his nature; or, becauſe he cannot have it; or, becauſe he will not. The former cannot be; for if he hath impreſt upon air and light a reſemblance of his excellency, to diffuſe themſelves and fill ſo vaſt a ſpace; is ſuch an excellency inconſiſtent with the creator more than the creature? whatſoever perfection the creature hath, is eminently in God. *Underſtand, O ye brutiſh among the people; and ye fools when will you be wiſe? He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear? he that formed the eye, ſhall he not ſee? he that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall not he know?* By the ſame reaſon he that hath given ſuch a power to thoſe creatures, air and light, ſhall not he be much more filling all ſpaces of the world? it is ſo clear a rule, that the pſalmiſt fixes a folly and brutiſhneſs upon thoſe that deny it; it is not therefore inconſiſtent with his nature, it were not then a perfection, but an imperfection; but whatſoever is an excellency in creatures, cannot in a way of eminency be an imperfection in God; if it be then a perfection, and God want it, it is becauſe he cannot have it; where then is his power? how can he be then the fountain of his own being? If he will not, where is his love to his own nature and glory? ſince no creature would deny that to itſelf which it can have, and is an excellency to it; God therefore hath not only a power or fitneſs to be every where, but he is actually every where.

Fourthly, Becauſe of his immutability.

If God did not fill all the ſpaces of heaven and earth, but only poſſeſs one, yet it muſt be acknowledged that God hath a power to move himſelf to another: it were abſurd to fix God in a part of the heavens, like a ſtar in an orb, without a power of motion to another place. If he be therefore eſſentially in heaven, may he not be upon the earth if he pleaſe, and transfer his ſubſtance from one place to another? to ſay he cannot, is to deny him a perfection which he hath beſtowed upon his creatures; the angels, his meſſengers, are ſometimes in heaven, ſometimes on the earth; the eagles, meaner creatures, are ſometimes in the air out of ſight, ſometimes upon the earth. If he doth move therefore and recede from one place, and ſettle in another, doth he not declare himſelf mutable by changing places? by being where he was not before, and in not being where he was before? He would not fill heaven and earth at once, but ſucceſſively; no man can be ſaid to fill a room, that moves from one part of a room to another; if therefore any in their imaginations, confine God to the heavens, they render him leſs than his creatures; if they allow him a power of motion from one place to another, they conceive him changeable; and in either of them they own him no greater than a finite and limited being; limited to heaven, if they fix him there; limited to that ſpace to which they imagine him to move.

Fifthly, Becauſe of his omnipotency.

The almightineſs of God is a notion ſettled in the minds of all, that God can do whatſoever he pleaſes, every thing that is not againſt the purity of his nature, and doth not imply a contradiction in itſelf; he can therefore create millions of worlds greater than this; and millions of heavens greater than this heaven he hath already created; if ſo, he is then in inconceivable ſpaces beyond this

this world, for his eſſence is not leſs and narrower than his power; and his power is not to be thought of a further extent than his eſſence; he cannot be excluded therefore from thoſe vaſt ſpaces where his power may fix thoſe worlds if he pleaſe; if ſo, it is no wonder that he ſhould fill this world; and there is no reaſon to exclude God from the narrow ſpace of this world, that is not contained in infinite ſpaces beyond the world. God is whereſoever he hath a power to act, but he hath a power to act every where in the world, every where out of the world; he is therefore every where in the world, every where out of the world. Before this world was made, he had a power to make it in the ſpace where now it ſtands; was he not then unlimitedly where the world now is, before the world received a being by his powerful word? why ſhould he not then be in every part of the world now? can it be thought that God who was immenſe before, ſhould after he had created the world, contract himſelf to the limits of one of his creatures, and tie himſelf to a particular place of his own creation, and be leſs after his creation than he was before?

This might alſo be proſecuted by an argument from his eternity. What is eternal in duration, is immenſe in eſſence; the ſame reaſon which renders him eternal, renders him immenſe; that which proves him to be always, will prove him to be every where.

The third thing is, propoſitions for the further clearing this doctrine from any exceptions.

1. This truth is not weakened by the expreſſions in ſcripture, where God is ſaid to dwell in heaven, and in the temple.

He is indeed ſaid to ſit in heaven, and to dwell on high; but he is no where ſaid to dwell only in the heavens, as confined to them. It is the court of his majeſtical preſence, but not the priſon of his eſſence. For when we are told, that the *heaven*

is his throne, we are told with the ſame breath, that the *earth is his footſtool*. He dwells on high in regard of the excellency of his nature; but he is in all places in regard of the diffuſion of his preſence. The ſoul is eſſentially in all parts of the body, but it doth not exert the ſame operations in all; the more noble diſcoveries of it are in the head and heart: in the head, where it exerciſeth the chiefeſt ſenſes for the enriching of the underſtanding: in the heart, where it vitally reſides, and communicates life and motion to the reſt of the body. It doth not underſtand with the foot or toe, though it be in all parts of the body it informs. And ſo God may be ſaid to dwell in heaven, in regard of the more excellent and majeſtic repreſentations of himſelf, both to the creatures that inhabit the place, as angels and bleſſed ſpirits; and alſo in thoſe marks of his greatneſs which he hath planted there, thoſe ſpiritual natures which have a nobler ſtamp of God upon them, and thoſe excellent bodies, as ſun and ſtars, which as ſo many tapers light us to behold his glory, and aſtoniſh the minds of men when they gaze upon them. It is his court, where he hath the moſt ſolemn worſhip from his creatures, all his courtiers attending there with a pure love, and glowing zeal. He reigns there in a ſpecial manner, without any oppoſition to his government; it is therefore called his *holy dwelling-place:* the earth hath not that title, ſince ſin caſt a ſtain and a ruining curſe upon it. The earth is not his throne, becauſe his government is oppoſed. But heaven is none of ſatan's precinct, and the rule of God is uncontradicted by the inhabitants of it. It is from thence alſo he hath given the greateſt diſcoveries of himſelf: thence he ſends the angels his meſſengers, his Son upon redemption, his Spirit for ſanctification. From heaven his gifts drop down upon our heads, and his grace upon our hearts. From thence the chiefeſt bleſſings of earth deſcend. The

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motions of the heavens fatten the earth; and the heavenly bodies are but ſtewards to the earthly comforts for man by their influence. Heaven is the richeſt, vaſteſt, moſt ſtedfaſt and majeſtic part of the viſible creation. It is there where he will at laſt manifeſt himſelf to his people in a full conjunction of grace and glory, and be for ever open to his people in uninterrupted expreſſions of goodneſs, and diſcoveries of his preſence, as a reward of their labour and ſervice. And in theſe reſpects it may peculiarly be called his throne. And this doth no more hinder his eſſential preſence in all parts of the earth, than it doth his gracious preſence in all the hearts of his people. God is in heaven in regard of the manifeſtation of his glory: in hell by the expreſſions of his juſtice: in the earth by the diſcoveries of his wiſdom, power, patience, and compaſſion: in his people by the monuments of his grace; and in all in regard of his ſubſtance.

He is ſaid alſo to dwell in the ark and temple. It is called, Pſa. xxvi. 8. *The habitation of his houſe, and the place where his honour dwells*; and to dwell in Jeruſalem as in his holy mountain; *the mountain of the Lord of Hoſts*, in regard of publiſhing his oracles, anſwering their prayers, manifeſting more of his goodneſs to the Iſraelites, than to any other nation in the world, erecting his true worſhip among them, which was not ſettled in any part of the world beſides; and his worſhip is principally intended in that pſalm. The ark is the place where his honour dwells; the worſhip of God is called the glory of God, *they changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man*, *i. e.* they changed the worſhip of God into idolatry; and to that alſo doth the place in Zechariah refer.

Now becauſe he is ſaid to dwell in heaven, is he eſſentially only there? is he not as eſſentially in the temple and ark, as he is in heaven, ſince there are as high expreſſions of his habitation there, as of

his dwelling in heaven? If he dwell only in heaven, how came he to dwell in the temple? both are aſſerted in ſcripture, one as much as the other. If his dwelling in heaven did not hinder his dwelling in the ark, it could as little hinder the preſence of his eſſence on the earth. To dwell in heaven, and in one part of the earth at the ſame time, is all one as to dwell in all parts of heaven, and all parts of earth. If he were in heaven, and in the ark and temple, it was the ſame eſſence in both, though not the ſame kind of manifeſtation of himſelf. If by his dwelling in heaven, be meant his whole eſſence, why is it not alſo to be meant by his dwelling in the ark? it was not ſure part of his eſſence that was in heaven, and part of his eſſence that was on earth, his eſſence would then be divided; and can it be imagined, that he ſhould be in heaven and the ark at the ſame time, and not in the ſpaces between? Could his eſſence be ſplit into fragments, and a gap made in it, that two diſtant ſpaces ſhould be filled by him, and all between be empty of him. So that God's being ſaid to dwell in heaven, and in the temple, is ſo far from impairing the truth of this doctrine, that it more confirms and evidences it.

2. Nor do the expreſſions of God's coming to us, or departing from us, impair this doctrine of his omnipreſence.

God is ſaid to hide his face from his people; to be far from the wicked; and the Gentiles are ſaid to be afar off, viz. from God; and upon the manifeſtation of Chriſt made near: theſe muſt not be underſtood of any diſtance or nearneſs of his eſſence, for that is equally near to all perſons and things; but of ſome other ſpecial way and manifeſtation of his preſence. Thus God is ſaid to be in believers by love, as they are in him; *he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him:* he that loves is in the thing beloved; and when two

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love one another, they are in one another; God is in a righteous man by a ſpecial grace, and far from the wicked in regard of ſuch ſpecial works; and God is ſaid to be in a place by a ſpecial manifeſtation, as when he was in the buſh, or manifeſting his glory upon Mount Sinai; *the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai.* God is ſaid to hide his face, when he withdraws his comforting preſence, diſturbs the repoſe of our hearts, flaſheth terror into our conſciences, when he puts men under the ſmart of the croſs, as though he had ordered his mercy utterly to depart from them; or when he doth withdraw his ſpecial aſſiſting providence from us in our affairs: ſo he departed from Saul, when he withdrew his direction and protection from him in the concerns of his government; *the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, i. e.* the ſpirit of government. God may be far from us in one reſpect, and near to us in another; far from us in regard of comfort, yet near to us in regard of ſupport, when his eſſential preſence continues the ſame; this is a neceſſary conſequent upon the infiniteneſs of God, the other is an act of the will of God; ſo he was ſaid to forſake Chriſt, in regard of his obſcuring his glory from his human nature, and inflicting his wrath; though he was near to him in regard of his grace, and preſerved him from contracting any ſpot in his ſufferings. We do not ſay the ſun is departed out of the heavens when it is beclouded; it remains in the ſame part of the heavens, paſſes on its courſe, though its beams do not reach us by reaſon of the bar between us and it: the ſoul is in every part of the body, in regard of its ſubſtance, and conſtantly in it, though it doth not act ſo ſprightly and vigorouſly at one time as at another in the ſame member, and diſcover itſelf ſo ſenſibly in its operations; ſo all the various effects of God to the ſons of men are but divers operations of the ſame eſſence. He is far from us or near to us, as he is a judge or a benefactor; when he comes

comes to puniſh, it notes not the approach of his eſſence, but the ſtroke of his juſtice; when he comes to benefit, it is not by a new acceſs of his eſſence, but an efflux of his grace; he departs from us when he leaves us to the frowns of his juſtice; he comes to us when he encircles us in the arms of his mercy; but he was equally preſent with us in both diſpenſations, in regard of his eſſence. And likewiſe God is ſaid to come down, *and the Lord came down to ſee the city*; when he doth ſome ſignal and wonderful works which attract the minds of men to the acknowledgment of a ſupreme power and providence in the world, who judged God abſent and careleſs before.

3. Nor is the eſſential preſence of God with all creatures any diſparagement to him.—Since it was no diſparagement to create the heaven and the earth, it is no diſparagement to him to fill them; if he were eſſentially preſent with them when he created them, it is no diſhonour to him to be eſſentially preſent with them, to ſupport them; if it were his glory to create them by his eſſence, when they were nothing; can it be his diſgrace to be preſent by his eſſence, ſince they are ſomething, and ſomething good, and very good in his eye? God ſaw every thing, and behold it was very good, or mighty good; all ordered to declare his goodneſs, wiſdom, power, and to make him adorable to man, and therefore took complacency in them. There is a harmony in all things, a combination in them for thoſe glorious ends for which God created them; and is it a diſgrace for God to be preſent with his own harmonious compoſition? Is it not a muſician's glory to touch with his fingers the treble, the leaſt and tendereſt ſtring, as well as the ſtrongeſt and greateſt baſs? Hath not every thing ſome ſtamp of God's own being upon it, ſince he eminently contains in himſelf the perfections of all his works? whatſoever hath being, hath a foot-ſtep of God upon

upon it; all declare the being of God, becauſe they had their being from God; and will God account it any diſparagement to him to be preſent with that which confirms his being, and the glorious perfections of his nature to his intelligent creatures? the meaneſt things are not without their virtues, which may boaſt God's being the creator of them; and rank them in the midſt of his works of wiſdom as well as power. Doth God debaſe himſelf to be preſent by his eſſence, with the things he hath made, more than he doth to know them by his eſſence? Is not the leaſt thing known by him? how? not by a faculty or act diſtinct from his eſſence, but by his eſſence itſelf: how is any thing diſgraceful to the eſſential preſence of God, that is not diſgraceful to his knowledge by his eſſence? Beſides, would God make any thing that ſhould be an invicible reaſon to him to part with his own infiniteneſs, by a contradiction of his own eſſence into a leſs compaſs than before? it was immenſe before, it had no bounds; and would God make a world that he would be aſhamed to be preſent with, and continue it to the diminution and leſſening of himſelf, rather than annihilate it to avoid the diſparagement? This were to impeach the wiſdom of God, and caſt a blemiſh upon his infinite underſtanding, that he knows not the conſequences of his work, or is well contented to be impaired in the immenſity of his own eſſence by it. No man thinks it a diſhonour to light, a moſt excellent creature, to be preſent with a toad or ſerpent; and though there be an infinite diſproportion between light, a creature, and the Father of Lights, the creator: yet, God being a ſpirit, knows how to be with bodies as if they were not bodies. And being jealous of his own honour, would not, could not do any thing that might impair him.

4. Nor will it follow, that becauſe God is eſſentially every where, that every thing is God.—God

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is not every where by any conjunction, compoſition, or mixture with any thing on earth; when light is in every part of a chryſtal globe, and encircles it cloſe on every ſide, do they become one? no, the chryſtal remains what it is, and the light retains its own nature: God is not in us as a part of us, but as an efficient and preſerving cauſe; it is not by his eſſential preſence, but by his efficacious preſence that he brings any perſon into a likeneſs to his own nature: God is ſo in his eſſence with things, as to be diſtinct from them as a cauſe from the effect; as a creator different from the creature, preſerving their nature, not communicating his own; his eſſence touches all, is in conjunction with none; finite and infinite cannot be joined; he is not far from us, therefore near to us; ſo that we live and move in him; nothing is God becauſe it moves in him, any more than a fiſh in the ſea, is the ſea, or a part of the ſea, becauſe it moves in it: doth a man that holds a thing in the hollow of his hand, transform it by that action, and make it like his hand? The ſoul and body are more ſtraitly united, than the eſſence of God is by his preſence with any creature: the ſoul is in the body as a form in matter, and from their union doth ariſe a man; yet in this near conjunction, both body and ſoul remain diſtinct; the ſoul is not the body, nor the body the ſoul; they both have diſtinct natures and eſſences; the body can never be changed into a ſoul, nor the ſoul into a body; no more can God into the creature, or the creature into God. Fire is in heated iron in every part of it, ſo that it ſeems to be nothing but fire; yet fire and iron is not the ſame thing. But ſuch a kind of arguing againſt God's omnipreſence, that if God were eſſentially preſent, every thing would be God, would exclude him from heaven as well as from earth. By the ſame reaſon, ſince they acknowledge God eſſentially in heaven, the heaven where he is, ſhould be changed

changed into the nature of God; and by arguing againſt his preſence in earth, upon this ground they run ſuch an inconvenience, that they muſt own him to be no where, and that which is no where is nothing. Doth the earth become God, becauſe God is eſſentially there, any more than the heavens, where God is acknowledged by all to be eſſentially preſent.

Again, if where God is eſſentially, that muſt be God, then if they place God in a point of the heavens, not only that point muſt be God, but all the world; becauſe if that point be God, becauſe God is there, then the point touched by that point muſt be God, and ſo conſequently as far as there are any points touched by one another. We live and move in God, ſo we live and move in the air; we are no more God by that, than we are mere air becauſe we breathe in it, and it enters into all the pores of our body: nay, where there was a ſtraiter union of the divine nature to the human in our Saviour, yet the nature of both was diſtinct, and the humanity was not changed into the divinity, nor the divinity into the humanity.

5. Nor doth it follow, that becauſe God is every where, therefore a creature may be worſhipped without idolatry.—Some of the heathens, who acknowledged God's omnipreſence, abuſed it to the countenancing idolatry; becauſe God was reſident in every thing, they thought every thing might be worſhipped; and ſome have uſed it as an argument againſt this doctrine: the beſt doctrines may by mens corruptions be drawn out into unreaſonable and pernicious concluſions. Have you not met with any, that from the doctrine of God's free mercy, and our Saviour's ſatisfactory death, have drawn poiſon to feed their luſts, and conſume their ſouls? a poiſon compoſed by their own corruption, and not offered by thoſe truths. The apoſtle intimates to us, that ſome did, or at leaſt were ready

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to be more laviſh in ſinning, becauſe God was abundant in grace; *ſhall we continue in ſin, that grace may abound?* when he prevents an objection that he thought might be made by ſome: but as to this caſe; ſince though God be preſent in every thing, yet every thing retains its nature, diſtinct from the nature of God; therefore it is not to have a worſhip due to the excellency of God. As long as any thing remains a creature, it is only to have the reſpect from us, which is due to it in the rank of creatures. When a prince is preſent with his guard, or if he ſhould go arm in arm with a peaſant, is therefore the veneration and honour due to the prince, to be paid to the peaſant, or any of his guard? would the preſence of the prince excuſe it, or would it not aggravate it? he acknowledged ſuch a perſon equal to me, by giving him my rights, even in my ſight. Though God dwelt in the temple, would not the Iſraelites have been accounted guilty of idolatry, had they worſhipped the images of the cherubims, or the ark, or the altar, as objects of worſhip, which were erected only as means for his ſervice? Is there not as much reaſon to think God was as eſſentially preſent in the temple, as in heaven; ſince the ſame expreſſions are uſed of the one and the other? the ſanctuary is called the glorious high throne; and he is ſaid to dwell between the cherubims, *i. e.* the two cherubims that were at the two ends of the mercy ſeat, appointed by God as the two ſides of his throne in the ſanctuary, Exod. xxv. 18. where he was to dwell, ver. 8. and meet and commune with his people, ver. 22. Could this excuſe Manaſſeh's idolatry in bringing in a carved image into the houſe of God? Had it been a good anſwer to the charge, God is preſent here, and therefore every thing may be worſhipped as God? If he be only eſſentially in heaven, would it not be idolatry to direct a worſhip to the heavens, or any part of it

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as a due object, because of the presence of God there? Though we look up to the heavens, where we pray and worship God, yet heaven is not the object of worship, the soul abstracts God from the creature.

6. Nor is God defiled by being present with those creatures which seem filthy to us.—Nothing is filthy in the eye of God as his creature; he could never else have pronounced all good; whatsoever is filthy to us, yet as it is a creature, it owes itself to the power of God: his essence is no more defiled by being present with it, than his power by producing it: no creature is foul in itself, though it it may seem so to us: doth not an infant lie in a womb of filthiness and rottenness? yet is not the power of God present with it, in working it curiously in the lower parts of the earth? are his eyes defiled by seeing the substance when it is yet imperfect? or his hand defiled by writing every member in his book? Have not the vilest and most noisome things, excellent medicinal virtues? How are they endued with them? how are those qualities preserved in them? by any thing without God, or no? All creatures being the effects of his power, may be the objects of his presence; can any place be more foul than hell, if you take it either for the hell of the damned, or for the grave where there is rottenness? yet there he is. When Satan appeared before God, and God spake with him, could God contract any impurity by being present where that filthy spirit was, more impure than any corporeal noisome, and defiling thing can be? No, God is purity to himself in the midst of noisomeness; a heaven to himself in the midst of hell: who ever heard of a sun beam stained by shining upon a quag mire, any more than sweetened by breaking into a perfumed room? though the light shines upon pure and impure things, yet it mixes not itself with either of them; so though God be present with devil

devils and wicked men, yet without any mixture; he is preſent with their eſſence to ſuſtain it and ſupport it; not in their defection, wherein lies their defilement; and which is not a phyſical, but a moral evil; bodily filth can never touch an incorporeal ſubſtance. Spirits are not preſent with us in the ſame manner that one body is preſent with another; bodies can by a touch only, defile bodies; is the glory of an angel ſtained by being in a coal mine? or could the angel that came into the lions den, to deliver Daniel, be any more diſturbed by the ſtench of the place, than he could be ſcratched by the paws, or torn by the teeth of the beaſts? their ſpiritual nature ſecures them againſt any infection when they are miniſtering ſpirits to perſecuted believers in their naſty priſons. The ſoul is ſtraitly united with the body, but it is not made white or black, by the whiteneſs or blackneſs of its habitation; is it infected by the corporeal impurities of the body, while it continually dwells in a ſea of filthy pollution? If the body be caſt into a common ſhore, is the ſoul defiled by it? can a diſeaſed body derive a contagion to the ſpirit that animates it? is it not often the purer by grace, the more the body is infected by nature? Hezekiah's ſpirit was ſcarce ever more fervent with God, than when the ſore, which ſome think to be a plague ſoar, was upon him; how can any corporeal filth impair the purity of the divine eſſence? it may as well be ſaid, that God is not preſent in battles and fights for his people, becauſe he would not be diſturbed by the noiſe of cannons and claſhing of ſwords, as that he is not preſent in the world becauſe of the ill ſcents. Let us therefore conclude this, with the expreſſion of a learned man of our own, "To deny the omnipreſence of God, becauſe of ill ſcented places, is to meaſure God rather by the nicety of ſenſe, than by the ſagacity of reaſon."

God's Knowledge.

Pſalm cxlvii. 5.

GREAT IS OUR LORD, AND OF GREAT POWER: HIS UNDERSTANDING IS INFINITE.

IT is uncertain who was the author of this pſalm, and when it was penned; ſome think after the return from the Babyloniſh captivity: it is a pſalm of praiſe, and is made up of matter of praiſe from the beginning to the end; God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures; the eſſential excellency of his nature.

The pſalmiſt doubles his exhortation to praiſe God, ver. 1. *Praiſe ye the Lord, ſing praiſe to our God*; to praiſe him from his dominion as Lord, from his grace and mercy as our God; from the excellency of the duty itſelf, it is good, it is comely: ſome read it comely, ſome lovely or deſirable, from the various derivation of the word.

In the verſe, there is a deſcription of God. In his eſſence, *great is our Lord*—In his power, *of great power*—In his knowledge, *his underſtanding is infinite*; his underſtanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his infinite underſtanding, I am to diſcourſe.

For the better underſtanding of this, we will enquire,

1. What kind of knowledge or underſtanding there is in God.

2. What God knows.

3. How God knows things.

4. The proof, that God knows all things.

5. The uſe of all to ourſelves.

Firſt. What kind of underſtanding or knowledge there is in God?—The knowledge of God in ſcripture, hath various names, according to the various relations or objects of it: in reſpect of preſent things, it is called knowledge or ſight; in reſpect of things paſt, remembrance; in reſpect of things future, or to come, it is called fore-knowledge or preſcience, 1 Peter i. 2. In regard of the univerſality of the objects, it is called omniſcience; in regard of the ſimple underſtanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wiſdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. He muſt have knowledge, otherwiſe he could not be wiſe; wiſdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wiſdom.

As to what this knowledge is; if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and aſcribing to him the moſt eminent way of underſtanding; becauſe we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleaſed to condeſcend to us in his own ways of diſcovery; that is, under ſome way of ſimilitude to his perfecteſt creatures; therefore we have a notion of God by his underſtanding and will; underſtanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himſelf in acting according to his wiſdom, and whereby he doth approve or diſapprove. Yet we muſt not meaſure his underſtanding by our own, or think it to be of ſo groſs a temper as a created mind; that he hath eyes of fleſh, or ſees or knows as man ſees. We

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can no more meaſure his knowledge by ours, than we can meaſure his eſſence by our eſſence: as he hath an incomprehenſible eſſence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket, ſo he hath an incomprehenſible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of duſt, or mere darkneſs: his thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.

The knowledge of God is variouſly divided by the ſchools, and acknowledged by all divines.

Firſt, A knowledge *viſionis & ſimplicis intelligentiæ*; the one we may call a ſight, the other an underſtanding; the one refers to ſenſe, the other to the mind.

1. A knowledge of viſion or ſight; thus God knows himſelf and all things that really were, are, or ſhall be in time; all thoſe things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually ſprung up into the world, but lie couchant in their cauſes.

2. A knowledge of intelligence, or ſimple underſtanding; the object of this is not things that are in being, or that ſhall by any decree of God, ever be exiſtent in the world; but ſuch things as are poſſible to be wrought by the power of God, though they ſhall never in the leaſt peep up into being, but lie for ever wrapped up in darkneſs and nothing. This alſo is a neceſſary knowledge to be allowed to God, becauſe the object of this knowledge is neceſſary. The poſſibility of more creatures than ever were or ſhall be, is a concluſion that hath a neceſſary truth in it; as it is neceſſary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not neceſſary that it ſhould produce more creatures; ſo it is neceſſary that whatſoever the power of God can work, is poſſible to be. And as God knows this poſſibility, ſo he knows all the objects that are thus poſſible; and herein doth much conſiſt

the infiniteneſs of his knowledge, as ſhall be ſhewn preſently.

Theſe two kinds of knowledge differ; that of viſion, is of things which God had decreed to be, though they are not yet. That of intelligence, is of things which never ſhall be; yet they may be, or are poſſible to be, if God pleaſe to will and order their being; one reſpects things that ſhall be; the other, things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be: the knowledge of viſion follows the act of God's will, and ſuppoſeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could ſuppoſe any firſt or ſecond in God's decree, we might ſay, God knew them as poſſible before he decreed them; he knew them as future becauſe he decreed them.) For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to paſs, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to paſs. But the knowledge of intelligence ſtands without any act of his will, in order to the being of thoſe things he knows; he knows poſſible things only in his power; he knows other things, both in his power, as able to effect them, and in his will, as determining the being of them; ſuch knowledge we muſt grant to be in God, for there is ſuch a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not only know and ſee what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have a conception of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are poſſible to the power of God.

Secondly, There is a ſpeculative and practical knowledge in God.

1. A ſpeculative knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a reſpect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things poſſible is in God only ſpeculative, and ſome ſay God's knowledge of himſelf is only ſpeculative, becauſe there is nothing for God to work in himſelf: and though he knows himſelf, yet this knowledge of himſelf

himſelf doth not terminate there, but flowers into a love of himſelf, and delight in himſelf; yet this love of himſelf, and delight in himſelf, is not enough to make it a practical knowledge, becauſe it is natural, and naturally and neceſſarily flows from the knowledge of himſelf and his own goodneſs: he cannot but love himſelf, and delight in himſelf, upon the knowledge of himſelf. But that which is properly practice, is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought not naturally and neceſſarily, but in a way of freedom and counſel. As when we ſee a beautiful flower or other thing, there ariſeth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, becauſe it is a natural affection of the will, ariſing from the virtue of the object, without any conſideration of the underſtanding in a practical manner by counſelling, commanding, &c.

2. A practical knowledge, which tends to operation and practice, and is the principal of working about things that are known; as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or myſtery. This knowledge is in God: the knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is ſuch a kind of knowledge; for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and neceſſary act, as the loving himſelf, and delighting in himſelf is, but wholly free: for it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no; this is called diſcretion, Jer. x. 12. *He hath ſtretched out the heavens by his diſcretion.* Such alſo is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge *the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew.* This is a knowledge whereby he knows the eſſence, qualities, and properties of what he creates and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he reſides; ſo that ſpeculative knowledge

is God's knowledge of himſelf and things poſſible; practical knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable; yet in ſome ſort this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are poſſible, which God might make, though he will not: for as he knows that they can be created, ſo he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge: for it is not requiſite to conſtitute a knowledge practical, actually to act, but that the knowledge in itſelf be referable to action.

3. There is a knowledge of approbation, as well as apprehenſion.—This the ſcripture often mentions: words of underſtanding are uſed to ſignify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the ſimple act of the underſtanding, the complacency and pleaſure of the will; and is improperly knowledge, becauſe it belongs to the will, and not to the underſtanding; only it is radically in the underſtanding, becauſe affection implies knowledge; men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken, Amos iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth.* And 2 Tim. ii. 19, *The Lord knows who are his,* that is, he loves them; he doth not only know them, but acknowledge them for his own: it notes not only an exact underſtanding, but a ſpecial care of them; and ſo is that to be underſtood, Gen. 1. *God ſaw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good:* that is, he ſaw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehenſion. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of viſion, his ſight of his creatures; for God doth not love or delight in any thing but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being. On the contrary alſo, when God doth not approve, he is ſaid not to know, Mat. xxv. 12. *I know you not:* and Mat. vii. 23. *I never knew you:* he doth not approve of their works:

works: it is not an ignorance of underſtanding, but an ignorance of will; for while he ſaith he never knew them, he teſtifies that he did know them, in rendering the reaſon of his diſapproving them, becauſe he knows all their works: ſo he knows them, and doth not know them, in a different manner: he knows them ſo as to underſtand them; but he doth not know them ſo as to love them.

We muſt then aſcribe an univerſal knowledge to God. If we deny him a ſpeculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we deſtroy his deity, we make him ignorant of his own power: if we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourſelves to be his creatures: for as his creatures, we are the fruits of this his diſcretion diſcovered in creation: if we deny his knowledge of viſion, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exerciſe a ſovereign and uncontrolable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the thing he is to govern? If he had not knowledge, he could make no revelation; he that knows not, cannot dictate; we could then have no ſcripture. To deny God knowledge, is to daſh out the ſcripture, and demoliſh the deity.

God is deſcribed in Zech. iii. 9. *with ſeven eyes*, to ſhew his perfect knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world; and the cherubims, or whatſoever is meant by the wings, are deſcribed to be full of eyes, both before and behind, round about them; much more is God all eye, all ear, all underſtanding. The ſun is a natural image of God, if the ſun had an eye, it would ſee; if it had an underſtanding, it would know all viſible things; it would ſee what it ſhines upon, and underſtand what it influenceth in the moſt obſcure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature the ſun in excellency and beauty, and not in light and underſtanding? certainly more than the ſun excels an atom or grain of duſt.

We may yet make ſome repreſentation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which ſeems to look upon every one, though there be never ſo great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can caſt his eye upon it, but it ſeems to behold him in particular, and ſo exactly as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the ſame caſt of it; ſhall art frame a thing of that nature, and ſhall not the God of art and all knowledge, be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold every thing in the world, which is infinitely leſs to him than a wide room to a picture?

Second, What God knows? how far his underſtanding reaches?

1. God knows himſelf, and only knows himſelf.—This is the firſt and original knowledge, wherein he excels all creatures: no man doth exactly know himſelf, much leſs underſtand the full nature of a ſpirit; much leſs ſtill the nature and perfections of God; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty, and an infinite object? Herein conſiſts the infiniteneſs of God's knowledge, that he knows his own eſſence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any elſe. It doth not ſo much conſiſt in knowing the creatures which he hath made, as in knowing himſelf who was never made. It is not ſo much infinite, becauſe he knows all things which are in the world, or that ſhall be; or things that he can make, becauſe the number of them is finite; but becauſe he hath a perfect and comprehenſive knowledge of his own infinite perfections. Though it be ſaid that angels *ſee his face*, Mat. xviii. 10. that ſight notes rather their immediate attendance, than their exact knowledge; they ſee ſome ſigns of his preſence and majeſty, more illuſtrious and expreſs than ever appeared to man in this life; but the eſſence of God is inviſible to them, hid

hid from them in the ſecret place of eternity; none knows God but himſelf, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, ſave the ſpirit of a man? ſo the things of God knows no man but the ſpirit of God; the ſpirit of God ſearches the deep things of God*; ſearcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly underſtands, as thoſe who have their eyes in every chink and crevice, to ſee what lies hid there: the word ſearch, notes not an enquiry, but an exact knowledge, ſuch as men have of things upon a diligent ſcrutiny; as when God is ſaid to ſearch the heart and reigns, it doth not ſignify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the moſt intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themſelves, ſo the depths of the divine eſſence, perfections and decrees, are unknown to any but to God himſelf; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do.

If God did not know himſelf, he would not be perfect.—It is the perfection of a creature to know itſelf, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himſelf, he would want an infinite perfection, and ſo would ceaſe to be God, in being defective in that which intellectual creatures in ſome meaſure poſſeſs. As God is the moſt perfect being, ſo he muſt have the moſt perfect underſtanding: If he did not underſtand himſelf, he would be under the greateſt ignorance, becauſe he would be ignorant of the moſt excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the underſtanding; and ignorance of one ſelf, is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God ſhould know all things without himſelf, and not know himſelf, he would not have the moſt perfect knowledge, becauſe he would not have the knowledge of the beſt of objects.

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Without the knowledge of himſelf, he could not be bleſſed.—Nothing can have any complacency in itſelf, without the knowledge of itſelf. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itſelf, without underſtanding itſelf. The bleſſedneſs of God conſiſts not in the knowledge of any thing without him, but in the knowledge of himſelf and his own excellency, as the principle of all things; if therefore he did not perfectly know himſelf and his own happineſs, he could not enjoy a happineſs; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. *He is God bleſſed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. and therefore for ever had a knowledge of himſelf.

Without the knowledge of himſelf he could create nothing.—For he would be ignorant of his own power, and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends, could not act: if he did not know himſelf, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing, can do nothing; he could not know an effect to be poſſible to him, unleſs he knew his own power as a cauſe.

Without the knowledge of himſelf he could govern nothing.—He could not without the knowledge of his own holineſs and righteouſneſs, preſcribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature, order himſelf a manner of worſhip ſuitable to it.

All worſhip muſt be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worſhipped; he muſt therefore know his own authority whereby worſhip was to be enacted, his own excellency to which worſhip was to be ſuited, his own glory to which worſhip was to be directed. If he did not know himſelf, he did not know what to puniſh, becauſe he would not know what was contrary to himſelf: not knowing himſelf, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy

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of him. In fine, he could not know other things, unleſs he knew himſelf: unleſs he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things: unleſs he knew his own wiſdom, he could not know the beauty of his works: unleſs he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unleſs he knew his own holineſs, he could not know what was evil: and unleſs he knew his own juſtice, he could not know how to puniſh the crimes of his offending creatures. And therefore,

God knows himſelf, becauſe his knowledge with his will is the cauſe of all other things that can fall under his cognizance; he knows himſelf firſt, before he can know any other thing; that is, firſt according to our conceptions; for indeed God knows himſelf and all other things at once; he is the firſt truth, and therefore is the firſt object of his own underſtanding. There is nothing more excellent than himſelf, and therefore nothing more known to him than himſelf. As he is all knowledge, ſo he hath in himſelf the moſt excellent object of knowledge. To underſtand, is properly to know oneſelf. No object is ſo intelligible to God as God is to himſelf; nor ſo intimately and immediately joined with his underſtanding as himſelf: for his underſtanding is his eſſence, himſelf.

2. He knows himſelf by his own eſſence.—He knows not himſelf and his own power, by the effect, becauſe he knows himſelf from eternity, before there was a world, or any effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cauſe, for God hath no cauſe; nor a knowledge of himſelf by any ſpecies or any thing from without: if it were any thing from without himſelf, that muſt be created or uncreated; if uncreated, it would be God; and ſo we muſt either own many gods, or own it to be his eſſence, and ſo not diſtinct from himſelf: if created, then his knowledge of himſelf would depend upon a creature; he could not then know

know himſelf from eternity, but in time, becauſe nothing can be created from eternity, but in time. God knows not himſelf by any faculty, for there is no compoſition in God, he is not made up of parts, but is a ſimple being; ſome therefore have called God, not *intellectus*, underſtanding, becauſe that favours of a faculty, but *intellectio*, intelection. God is all in act the knowledge of himſelf, and his knowledge of other things.

God therefore knows himſelf perfectly, comprehenſively.—Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him, he reflects upon every thing that he is. There is a poſitive comprehenſion, ſo God doth not comprehend himſelf; for what is comprehended, hath bounds; and what is comprehended by itſelf, is finite to itſelf: and there is a negative comprehenſion, God ſo comprehends himſelf; nothing in his own nature is obſcure to him, unknown by him. For there is as great a perfection in the underſtanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The underſtanding of God, and the nature of God, are both infinite, and ſo equal to one another; his underſtanding is equal to himſelf; he knows himſelf ſo well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly, than himſelf is known to himſelf. He knows himſelf in the higheſt manner, becauſe nothing is ſo proportioned to the underſtanding of God as himſelf: he knows his own eſſence, goodneſs, power, all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own underſtanding, ſo that nothing of himſelf is in the dark to himſelf. And in this reſpect, ſome uſe this expreſſion, that the infiniteneſs of God is in a manner finite to himſelf, becauſe it is comprehended by himſelf.

Thus God tranſcends all creatures; thus his underſtanding is truly infinite, becauſe nothing but himſelf is an infinite object for it. What angels may underſtand of themſelves perfectly, I know not; but no creature in the world underſtands himſelf;

ſelf: man underſtands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature; upon God's knowledge of himſelf depends the comfort of his people, and the terror of the wicked; this is alſo a clear argument for his knowledge of all other things, without himſelf: he that knows himſelf muſt needs know all other things leſs than himſelf, and which were made by himſelf. When the knowledge of his own immenſity and infiniteneſs is not an object too difficult for him, the knowledge of a finite and limited creature in all its actions, thoughts, circumſtances, cannot be too hard for him. Since he knows himſelf who is infinite: he cannot but know whatſoever is finite; this is the foundation of all his other knowledge; the knowledge of every thing preſent, paſt, and to come, is far leſs than the knowledge of himſelf. He is more incomprehenſible in his own nature, than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be: if he then have a perfect comprehenſive knowledge of his own nature, any knowledge of all other things is leſs than the knowledge of himſelf; this ought to be well conſidered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be poſſible, paſt, preſent or future.

Whether they be things that he can do, but will never do; or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now exiſting, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate cauſes; if his underſtanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatſoever that can be known, elſe his underſtanding would have bounds, and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite; if he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, *a but*, God knows all things *but* this, a bar is then ſet to his knowledge. If there were any thing, any particular

circumſtance

circumſtance in the whole creation, or non-creation, and poſſible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be ſaid to be omniſcient. As he would not be almighty, if any one thing that implied not a repugnancy to his nature, did tranſcend his power.

All things poſſible.—No queſtion but God knows what he could create, as well as what he hath created; what he would not create, as well as what he reſolved to create: he knew what he would not do, before he willed to do it; this is the next thing which declares the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding: for as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures, ſo is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things poſſible to his power. Poſſibles are infinite; that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what God doth know; otherwiſe his power would be more infinite than his knowledge: if he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his underſtanding; becauſe all creatures may be numbered, but poſſible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the ſame reaſon of this in eternity; when never ſo many numbers of years are run out, there is ſtill more to come, there ſtill wants an end; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his underderſtanding; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by any thing.

This the ſcripture gives us ſome account of:—God knows things that are not, *for he calls things that are not, as if they were,* Rom. iv. 17. he calls things that are not, as if they were in being; what he calls is not unknown to him: if he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be; as he knows things that ſhall be, becauſe he wills them; ſo he knows things that might be, becauſe he is able to effect them. He knew the inhabitants of

of Kelah would betray David to Saul, if he remained in that place, 1 Sam. xxiii. 11. he knew what they would do upon that occaſion, though it was never done; as he knew what was in their power and in their wills, ſo he muſt needs know what is within the compaſs of his own power: as he can permit more than he doth permit, ſo he knows what he can permit, and what upon that permiſſion would be done by his creatures; ſo God knew the poſſibility of the Tyrians repentance, if they had had the ſame means, heard the ſame truths, and beheld the ſame miracles, which were offered to the ears, and preſented to the eyes, of the Jews, Mat. xi. 21.

This muſt needs be ſo, becauſe man knows things that are poſſible to him, though he will never effect them.—A carpenter knows a houſe in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never build a houſe according to that model: a watch-maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his inſtruments: man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it. As the underſtanding of man hath a virtue, that where it ſees one man, it may imagine thouſands of men of the ſame ſhape, ſtature, form, parts; yea, taller, more vigorous, ſprightly, intelligent, than the man he ſees; becauſe it is poſſible ſuch a number may be: ſhall not the underſtanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, ſince the underſtanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I ſee, can produce a thouſand like him? If the divine underſtanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number; it may be demanded, whether God can underſtand any thing farther than that number, or whether he cannot? If he can, then he doth actually underſtand all thoſe things which he hath a power to underſtand; otherwiſe

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there would be an increaſe of God's knowledge, if it were actually now, and not before, and ſo he would be more perfect than he was before; if he cannot underſtand them, then he cannot underſtand what a human mind can underſtand; for our underſtandings can multiply numbers *in infinitum*; and there is no number ſo great, but a man can ſtill add to it: we muſt ſuppoſe the divine underſtanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never was, nor ſhall be; he muſt needs know whatſoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, becauſe God concurs to the ſupport of faculty in that imagination; and though it may be replied, an atheiſt may imagine that there is no God; a man may imagine that God can lie, or be deſtroyed; doth God know therefore that he is not, or that he can lie, or ceaſe to be? No, he knows he cannot; his knowledge extends to things poſſible, not to things impoſſible to himſelf; he knows it as imaginable by man, but not as poſſible in itſelf; becauſe it is utterly impoſſible, and repugnant to the nature of God, ſince he eminently contains in himſelf all things poſſible, paſt, preſent, and to come; he cannot know himſelf without knowing them.

God knowing his own power, knows whatſoever is in his power to effect.—If he knows not all things poſſible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and ſo would not know himſelf, as a cauſe ſufficient for more things than he hath created. How can he comprehend himſelf, who comprehends not all effluxes of things poſſible that may come from him, and be wrought by him? How can he know himſelf as a cauſe, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce? Since the power of God extends to numberleſs things, his knowledge alſo extends to numberleſs objects; as if an unit could ſee the numbers it could produce, it would ſee infinite numbers; for an unit is,

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as it were, all number. God knowing the fruitfulneſs of his own virtue, knows a numberleſs multitude of things which he can do, more than have been done, or ſhall be done by him; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections than any of them which he hath created have: ſo that if the world ſhould laſt many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this; and having created an inconceivable number, he knows he could ſtill create more: ſo that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men and other creatures in himſelf, infinite kinds of things, infinite ſpecies and individuals under thoſe kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may diſplay and diſcover itſelf. A comprehenſive knowledge of his own power doth neceſſarily include the objects of that power; ſo he knows whatſoever he could effect, and whatſoever he could permit, if he pleaſed to do it.

If God could not underſtand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created: for it cannot be conceived how he can create any thing that he is ignorant of; what he doth not know, he cannot do: he muſt know alſo the extent of his own goodneſs, and how far any thing is capable to partake of it: ſo much therefore any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his power.

It is further evident that God knows all poſſible things, becauſe he knew thoſe things which he has created, before they were created, when they were yet in a poſſibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a poſſibility, and not in actual reality. It is abſurd to imagine that his underſtanding

did lack after the creatures, and draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is abſurd to think that God did create, before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew thoſe things he did create when they were poſſible, he muſt know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are poſſible.

To conclude this, we muſt conſider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or ſhall be. He ſees poſſible things as poſſible, not as things that ever are or ſhall be. If he ſaw them as exiſting or future, and they ſhall never be, this knowledge would be falſe, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows thoſe things not in themſelves, becauſe they are not, nor in their cauſes becauſe they ſhall never be: he knows them in his own power, not in his will: he underſtands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things poſſible he knows only in his power, things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleaſure to give being to them. Thoſe that ſhall never come to paſs, he knows only in himſelf, as a ſufficient cauſe; thoſe things that ſhall come into being, he knows in himſelf as the efficient cauſe, and alſo in their immediate ſecond cauſes.

This ſhould teach us to ſpend our thoughts in the admirations of the excellency of God, and the divine knowledge; his underſtanding is infinite.

God knows all things paſt.—This is an argument uſed by God himſelf to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols, Iſa. xli. 22. *Let them ſhew the former things, what they be, that we may conſider them, and know the latter end of them.* He knows them as if they were now preſent, and not paſt: for indeed in his eternity there is nothing paſt or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance in ſcripture, as when God remembered

bered Rachel's prayer for a child, Gen. xxx. 22. and he is ſaid to put tears into his bottle, and write them in his book of accompts, which ſignifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumſtances paſt in the world; and this knowledge is called a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. ſignifying the perpetual preſence of things paſt, before him. There are two elegant expreſſions, ſignifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of ſins paſt, Job xiv. 17. *My tranſgreſſion is ſealed up in a bag, and thou ſoweſt up my iniquity.* A metaphor taken from men that put up in a bag the money they would cautiouſly keep, tie the bag, ſow up the holes, and bind it hard that nothing may fall out; or a veſſel wherein they reſerve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous ſtuff, that nothing may leak out, but be ſafely kept till the time of uſe. Or elſe, as ſome think, from the bags attorneys carry with them, full of writings, when they are to manage a cauſe againſt a perſon. Thus we find God often in ſcripture calling to men's minds their paſt actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude, wherein he teſtifies his remembrance of his own paſt benefits, and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard hath ſomething of infinity in it, ſince though the ſins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the ſins of one man in thoughts, words, and deeds, are numberleſs in his own account, and perhaps in the count of any creature, the ſins of all the vaſt numbers of men that have been, or ſhall be, are much more numberleſs, it cannot be leſs than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a ſurvey of them all at once.

If paſt things had not been known by God, how could Moſes have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former tranſactions, wherein all hiſtories are ſilent but the

ſcripture? How could he know the cauſe of man's preſent miſery ſo many ages after, wherewith all philoſophy was unacquainted? How could he have wrote the order of the creation, the particulars of the ſin of Adam, the circumſtances of Cain's murder, the private ſpeech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things paſt were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men, as well as by ourſelves, and reſerve the forms of divers things in our minds, which ariſe as occaſions are preſented to draw them forth? And ſhall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkneſs upon his underſtanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not deſtroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no leſs perfect than his underſtanding: if he did not know things paſt, he could not be a righteous governor, or exerciſe any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not diſpenſe rewards and puniſhments according to his promiſes and threatenings, if things that were paſt could be forgotten by him; he could not require that which is paſt, if he did not remember that which is paſt.

And though God be ſaid to forget in ſcripture, and not to know his people, and his people pray to him to remember them, as if he had forgotten them: this is improperly aſcribed to God. As God is ſaid to repent, when he changes things according to his counſel beyond the expectation of men; ſo he is ſaid to forget, when he defers the making good his promiſe to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked; this is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will: when he is ſaid to remember his covenant, it is to will grace according to his covenant; when he is ſaid to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the

the influences of it, whereby to puniſh the ſin of his people; and when he is ſaid not to know his people, it is not an abſolute forgetfulneſs of them, but withdrawing from them the teſtimonies of his kindneſs, and clouding the ſigns of his favour; ſo God in pardon is ſaid to forget ſin, not that he ceaſeth to know it, but ceaſeth to puniſh it: it is not to be meant of a ſimple forgetfulneſs, or a lapſe of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulneſs; ſo when his people in ſcripture pray, Lord remember thy word unto thy ſervant; no more is to be underſtood, but Lord fulfil thy word and promiſe to thy ſervant.

He knows things preſent.—Heb. iv. 13. *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*; this is grounded upon the knowledge of himſelf; it is not ſo difficult to know all creatures exactly, as to know himſelf, becauſe they are finite, but himſelf is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore every thing through which his omnipotence is diffuſed, all the acts and objects of it; not the leaſt thing that is the birth of his power, can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodneſs, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodneſs ſtrike; he therefore knows diſtinctly the properties of every creature, becauſe every property in them is a ray of his goodneſs; he is not only the efficient, but the exemplary cauſe; therefore as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, ſo he knows them in himſelf as the pattern. As a carpenter can give an account of every part and paſſage in a houſe he hath built, by conſulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. *He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good*, Gen. i. 31. full of a natural goodneſs he had endowed them with; he did not ignorantly pronounce them ſo, and call them good, whether he knew them or not; and therefore he

knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their firſt preſence. Is there any reaſon he ſhould be ignorant of every thing now preſent in the world, or that any thing that derives an exiſtence from him as a free cauſe, ſhould be concealed from him? If he did not know things preſent in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea by beaſts, which the infinite God was ignorant of; and if he did not know all things preſent, but only ſome; it is poſſible for the moſt bleſſed God to be deceived and be miſerable: ignorance is a calamity to the underſtanding: he could not preſcribe laws to his creatures, unleſs he knew their natures, to which thoſe laws were to be ſuited; no, not natural ordinances to the ſun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unleſs he knew the vigour and virtue in them, to execute thoſe ordinances; for to preſcribe laws above the nature of things, is inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of government; he muſt know how far they were able to obey; whether the laws were ſuited to their ability: and for his rational creatures, whether the puniſhments annexed to the laws, were proper, and ſuited to the tranſgreſſion of the creature.

He knows all creatures from the higheſt to the loweſt, the leaſt as well as the greateſt.—He knows the ravens and their young ones; the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten; every bird in the air, as well as any man, doth what he hath in a cage at home, Pſa. l. 11. *I know all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beaſts in the field*; which ſome read creeping things. *The clouds are numbered in his wiſdom*, Job xxxviii. 37. every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of ſnow, and the knots of hail, the ſands upon the ſea ſhore, the hairs upon the head; it is no more abſurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the ſtars, which

which he calls by their names, as well as the moſt glorious angel and bleſſed ſpirit; he knows them as well, as if there were none but them in particular for him to know; the leaſt things were framed by his art as well as the greateſt; the leaſt things partake of his goodneſs as well as the greateſt; he knows his own arts and his own goodneſs, and therefore all the ſtamps and impreſſions of them upon all his creatures; he knows the immediate cauſes of the leaſt, and therefore the effects of thoſe cauſes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it muſt extend to thoſe things which are the greateſt diſtance from him, to thoſe which approach neareſt to not being; ſince he did not want power to create, he cannot want underſtanding to know every thing he hath created, the diſpoſitions, qualities, and virtues of the minuteſt creature.

Nor is the underſtanding of God embaſed, and ſuffers a diminution by the knowledge of the vileſt and moſt inconſiderable things: is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of any thing? and can God have ſuch a defect in his moſt perfect underſtanding? Is the underſtanding of man of an impurer alloy, by knowing the nature of the rankeſt poiſons? by underſtanding a fly? or a ſmall inſect? or by conſidering the deformity of a toad? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind, to be able to diſcourſe of the nature of them? Was Solomon, who knew all from the cedar to the hyſop, debaſed by ſo rich a preſent of wiſdom from his creator? Is any glaſs defiled by preſenting a deformed image? Is there any thing more vile than the imaginations, which are only evil, and continually? doth not the mind of man deſcend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, ſuck in the moſt unclean things? yet God knows theſe in all their circumſtances, in every appearance, inſide and outſide. Is there any thing viler than ſome thoughts of men? than

ſome actions of men? their unclean beds and gluttinous vomiting, and luciferian pride? yet do not theſe fall under the eye of God, in all their nakedneſs? The Second Perſon's taking human nature, though it obſured, yet it did not diſparage the deity, or bring any diſgrace to it. Is gold the worſe for being formed into the image of a fly? doth it not ſtill retain the nobleneſs of the metal? When men are deſpiſed for deſcending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is becauſe they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and ſin in their enquiries after leſſer things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honour of God and the happineſs of themſelves; to be ambitions of ſuch a knowledge, and careleſs of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greateſt as well as the leaſt; mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater; nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God, doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himſelf, but within himſelf, wherein all things in their ideas are beautiful and comely: our knowledge of a deformed thing, is not a deforming of our underſtanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the underſtanding of God ſhould become material by knowing material things, any more than our underſtandings loſe their ſpirituality by knowing the nature of bodies: it is to be obſerved therefore that only thoſe ſenſes of men, as ſeeing, hearing, ſmelling, which have thoſe qualities for their objects that come neareſt the nature of ſpiritual things, as light, ſounds, fragrant odours, are aſcribed to God in ſcripture; not touching or taſting, which are ſenſes that are not exerciſed without a more immediate commerce with groſs matter; and the reaſon may be, becauſe we ſhould have no groſs

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thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter, like the things he knows.

As he knows all creatures, ſo God knows all the actions of creatures. He counts in particular all the ways of men. *Doth he not ſee all my ways, and count all my ſteps?* Job xxxi. 4. He tells their wanderings, as if one by one, Pſa. lvi. 8. *His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he ſees all his goings*, Job xxxiv. 21. a metaphor taken from men, when they look earneſtly, with fixed eyes upon a thing, to view it in every circumſtance, whence it comes, whither it goes, to obſerve every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering, but a fixed eye; and the ways of man are not only before his eyes, but he doth exactly ponder them; as one that will not be ignorant of the leaſt mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the ſtandard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members, as the hairs of our heads; the ſmalleſt actions before they be, whether civil, natural or religious, fall under his cognizance; what meaner than a man carrying a pitcher, yet our Saviour foretels it, Luke xxii. 10. God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done, had he not reſtrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah, had not God put a bar in his way, Gen. xx. 6. What a man that is taken away in his youth, would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea he knows the moſt ſecret words as well as actions; the words ſpoken by the King of Iſrael in his bed chamber, were revealed to Eliſha, 2 Kings vi. 12. and indeed how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants or a hive of bees in a glaſs, without turning our eyes; and ſhall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are leſs than bees or ants in his ſight, and more viſible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acuteſt eye of man?

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As God knows all the actions of creatures, ſo he knows all the thoughts of creatures. The thoughts are moſt cloſſetted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unleſs diſcloſed by ſome outward expreſſions; but God deſcends into the depths and abyſſes of the ſoul, diſcerns the moſt inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the ſun doth not ſo much enlighten the earth, as God underſtands the heart; all thoughts are as viſible to him, as flies and motes encloſed in a body of tranſparent chryſtal; this man naturally allows to God. Men often ſpeak to God by the motions of their minds and ſecret ejaculations; which they would not do, if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions; the ſcripture is plain and poſitive in this, *He tries the heart and the reins*, Pſa. vii. 9. as men by the uſe of fire diſcern the droſſy and purer parts of metals: the ſecret intentions and aims, the moſt lurking affections ſeated in the reins; he knows that which no man, no angel is able to know, which a man himſelf knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea *he weighs the ſpirit*, Prov. xvi. 2. He exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap. *He diſcerns the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 12. all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every ſtirring and purpoſe; ſo that not one hought can be withheld from him, Job. xlii. 2. yea *hell and deſtruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men?* Prov. xv. 11. He works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treaſure, ſay ſome: but more naturally, God knows the whole ſtate of the dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men conſumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures; things that ſeem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures,

creatures, whom he hath caſt out of his care for ever, into the arms of his juſtice, never more to caſt a delightful glance towards them; not a ſecret in any ſoul in hell, (which he hath no need to know, becauſe he ſhall not judge them by any of the thoughts they now have, ſince they were condemned to puniſhment) is hid from him; much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counſels of whoſe hearts are yet to be manifeſted, in order to their trial and cenſure; yea, he knows them before they ſpring up into actual being, Pſa. cxxxix. 2. *thou underſtandedſt my thoughts afar off*; *my thoughts*, that is, every thought; though innumerable thoughts paſs through me in a day, and that in the ſource and fountain, when it is yet in the womb, before it is our thought; if he knows them before their exiſtence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually ſpring up in us; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a diſcerner or criticiſer of the heart, Heb. iv. 12. As a critic diſcerns every letter, point, and ſtop; he is more intimate with us than our ſouls with our bodies, and hath more the poſſeſſion of us than we have of ourſelves; he knows them by an inſpection into the heart, not by the mediation of ſecond cauſes, by the looks or geſtures of men, as men may diſcern the thoughts of one another.

God diſcerns all good motions of the mind and will.—Theſe he puts into men, and needs muſt God know his own act; he knew the ſon of *Jeroboam to have ſome good thing in him towards the Lord God of Iſrael*, 1 Kings xiv. 13. and the integrity of David and Hezekiah; the freeſt motions of the will and affections to him. *Lord thou knoweſt that I love thee*, ſaith Peter, John xxi. 17. Love can be no more reſtrained, than the will itſelf can. A man may make

make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love.

God discerns all the evil notions of the mind and will.—*Every imagination of the heart,* Gen. vi. 5. the vanity of *mens thoughts,* Psa. xciv. 11. their inward darkness and deceitful disguises: no wonder that God who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it, Psa. xxxiii. 13, 15. *He looks from heaven and beholds all the children of men: he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works.* Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that any thing in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow, if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it.

He could not be a judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart did lye covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart; those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles, would merit a punishment, would meet with a reward; and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he could not be a wise law-giver; so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous judge; acts that are rotten in the spring, might be judged good by the fair colour and appearance.

This is the glory of God at the last day, *to manifest the secrets of all hearts,* 1 Cor. iv. 5. and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging, and the prerogative of trying the hearts, together,

Jer.

Jer. xi. 20. *but thou, O Lord of hoſts, that judgeſt righteouſly, that tryeſt the reins and the heart:* and Jer. xvii. 10. *I the Lord ſearch the heart, I try the reins*; to what end? even to give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings. And indeed his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidenceth that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God ſuſtains the mind of man in every act of thinking; in him we have not only the principle of life, but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members: *In him we live and move*, &c. Acts xvii. 28. Since he ſupports the vigor of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of thoſe acts which ſpring from the faculty, to which he doth at that inſtant communicate power and ability?

Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is an incommunicable property, belonging only to the divine underſtanding.—Creatures indeed may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themſelves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and ſee all that lodgeth there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge. Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may gueſs at them, by the acquaintance they have with the diſpoſition and conſtitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by ſome marks which an inward imagination may ſtamp upon the brain, blood, animal ſpirits, face, &c. but the knowing the thoughts merely as thought, without any impreſſion by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himſelf, as the main ſecret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his deity, as much as any elſe, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. *the heart of man is deſperately wicked, who can know it?* yes, there is one, and but one, *I the Lord ſearch the heart I try the reins. Man looks on the outward appearance,*

but

but the Lord looks upon the heart, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. where God is diſtinguiſhed by this perfection from all men whatſoever; others may know by revelation, as Eliſha did, what was in *Gehazi's heart,* 2 Kings v. 26. But God knows a man more than any man knows himſelf; what perſon upon earth underſtands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reſerves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations? all which God knows exactly.

God knows all ſin.—If he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows alſo the ſinfulneſs in thoſe acts and thoughts. This Zophar infers from God's puniſhing men, Job xi. 11. *For he knows vain man, he ſees his wickedneſs alſo*; he knows every man, and ſees the wickedneſs of every man: *He looks down from heaven,* and beholds not only the filthy perſons, but what is filthy in them; all nations in the world, and every man of every nation, none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes: *He ſearches Jeruſalem with candles,* Jer. xvi. 17. God follows ſinners ſtep by ſtep with his eye, and will not leave ſearching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that ſearcheth all chinks with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it diſtinctly in all the parts of it; how an adulterer riſes out of his bed to commit uncleanneſs, what contrivances he had, what ſteps he took, every circumſtance in the whole progreſs; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker ſpots upon it, which may moſt aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, puniſh it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? order to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? puniſh or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? *Cleanſe me,* ſaith David, *from my ſecret faults,* Pſa. xix. 12. ſecret in regard of others, ſecret in regard of himſelf; how could God cleanſe him from that whereof he

he was ignorant? He knows ſins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apoſtacy of the Jews; what gods they would ſerve, in what meaſure they would provoke him, and violate his covenant; he knew Judas's ſin long before Judas's actual exiſtence, foretelling it in the pſalms; and Chriſt predicted it before he acted it. He ſees ſin future in his own permitting will; he ſees ſin preſent in his own ſupporting act. As he knows things poſſible to himſelf, becauſe he knows his own power, ſo he knows things practicable by the creature, becauſe he knows the power and principles of the creature. This ſentiment of God is naturally writ in the fears of ſinners, upon lightening, thunder, or ſome prodigious operation of God in the world; what is the language of them, but that he ſees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward ſinfulneſs of their hearts; that he doth not only behold them as a mere ſpectator, but conſiders them as a juſt judge. And the poets ſay, that the ſins of men leaped into heaven, and were writ in parchments of Jupiter: ſin is acted on earth and recorded in heaven. God indeed doth not behold evil with the approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a ſpeculative knowledge, ſo as to underſtand the ſinfulneſs of it; or a knowledge *ſimplicis intelligentiæ*, of ſimple intelligence, as he permits them, not poſitively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of aſſent to them, but diſſent from them. Evil pertains to a diſſenting act of the mind, and an averſive act of the will; and what though evil formally taken, hath no diſtinct conceptions, becauſe it is a privation; a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehenſion of ſome being; would not this lie as ſtrongly againſt our own knowledge of ſin? Sin is a privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of ſin? by his knowing the

the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the ſubject of evil hath a being, and ſo hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itſelf, or in itſelf; but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? as we know darkneſs to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wiſdom. God knows all good by himſelf, becauſe he is the ſovereign good; is it ſtrange then, that he ſhould know all evil, ſince all evil is in ſome natural good?

God knows all future things, all things to come. —The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him, who is before time, above time, that is not meaſured by hours, or days, or years; if God did not know them, the hinderance muſt be in himſelf, or in the things themſelves, becauſe they are things to come: not in himſelf, if it did, it muſt ariſe from ſome impotency in his own nature, and ſo we render him weak; or from an unwillineſs to know, and ſo we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for ſimply conſidered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the knowledge of a thing includes ſomething of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes ſomething of imperfection: the knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wiſdom, which they call foreſight; it is then ſurely a greater perfection in God to know future things than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have ſomething of imperfection than be poſſeſſor of all perfection? nor doth the hinderance lie in the things themſelves, becauſe their futurity depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will, giving it exiſtence; ſo nothing can be future without his will, deſigning the futurity of it. Certainly if God knows all things poſſible, which he will not do, he muſt know all things future,

future, which he is not only able, but reſolved to do, or reſolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himſelf, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, neceſſarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do.

Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of moſt things in the world; for before the deluge he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and ſo the more perfection; then the underſtanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay, is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of thoſe things which are ſtill to come to paſs; he muſt tarry for a perfection, he wants till thoſe futurities come to be in act, till thoſe things which are to come, ceaſe to be future, and begin to be preſent. Either God knows them or deſires to know them; if he deſires to know them and doth not, there is ſomething wanting to him; all deſire ſpeaks an abſence of the object deſired, and a ſentiment of want in the perſon deſiring: if he doth not deſire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it deſtroys all providence, all his government of affairs; for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a proſpect of ſomething that is future: as in Joſeph's caſe, who was put into the pit, and ſold to the Egyptians in order to his future advancement, and the preſervation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, ſomething might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free will of Pharaoh, whereby Joſeph might have been cut ſhort of his advancement, and ſo God have been interrupted in the track and method of his deſigned providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath deſigned him, knows all the means before, whereby he will

govern him; and therefore hath a diſtinct and certain knowledge of all things; for a confuſed knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding is more ſeen than in knowing things paſt or preſent; his eyes are a *flame of fire*, Rev. i. 14. in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any elſe.

To make it further appear, that God knows all things future, conſider that every thing which is the object of God's knowledge without himſelf, was once only future.—There was a moment when nothing was in being but himſelf; he knew nothing actually paſt, becauſe nothing was paſt; nothing actually preſent, becauſe nothing had any exiſtence but himſelf; therefore only what was future; and why not every thing that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to paſs juſt at the beginning of the creation? God indeed knows every thing as preſent, but the things themſelves know by him were not preſent but future; the whole creation was once future, or elſe it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itſelf, elſe it could never have begun to be; did not God know what would be created by him, before it was created by him? Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before, what he ſhould create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them, and ſaw them in being? Creatures then did not ariſe from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures ſhould be, for he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they therefore muſt be known before they were made, and not known becauſe they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them. By the ſame reaſon

reaſon that he knew what creatures ſhould be before they were, he knows ſtill what creatures ſhall be before they are; for all things that are, were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cauſe; ſo the earth and heavens were in him, as a model is in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and ſoul, before it be brought forth into outward act.

The predictions of future things evidence this.—There is not a prophecy of any thing to come, but is a ſpark of his fore-knowledge, and bears witneſs to the truth of this aſſertion, in the punctual accompliſhment of it; this is a thing challenged by God as his own peculiar, wherein he ſurmounts all the idols that man's inventions have godded in the world, Iſa. xli. 21. 22. *Let them bring forth* (ſpeaking of the idols) *and ſhew us what ſhall happen, or declare us things to come: ſhew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.* Such a fore-knowledge of things to come, is here aſcribed to God by God himſelf, as a diſtinction of him from all falſe gods; ſuch a knowledge, that if any could prove that they were poſſeſſors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himſelf; that we may know that you are gods; he puts his deity to ſtand or fall upon this account, and this ſhould be the point which ſhould decide the controverſy, whether he or the heathen idols were the true God; the diſpute is managed by this medium. He that knows things to come, is God; I know things to come, *ergo*, I am God; the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods; God ſubmits the being of his deity to this trial. If God know things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be in his own account, no more a god than devils and men; no more a god than the Pagan idols he doth ſcoff at for this defect. If the heathen idols were to be ſtript of their deity for want of this foreknowledge of things to

come, would not the true God alſo fall from the ſame excellency, if he were defective in knowledge? he would in his own judgment no more deſerve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himſelf? It cannot be underſtood of future things in their cauſes, when the effects neceſſarily ariſe from ſuch cauſes, as light from the ſun, and heat from the fire; many of theſe, men know; more of them, angels and devils know; if God therefore had not a higher and further knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God, any more than angels and devils, who know neceſſary effects in their cauſes. The devils indeed did predict ſome things in the heathen oracles; but God is differenced from them here by the infiniteneſs of his knowledge, in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their particularities, things that depended on the liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of. Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might anſwer, they can conjecture, and ſo their deity were as good as God's; for though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet ſtill it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much then is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his deity? God aſſerts his knowledge of things to come, as a manifeſt evidence of his godhead; thoſe that deny therefore the argument that proves it, deny the concluſion too; for this will neceſſarily follow, that if he be God becauſe he knows future things, then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God; becauſe a certain knowledge

knowledge ſo as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inſeparable perfection of the deity: it was therefore well ſaid of Auſtin, that it was as high a madneſs to deny God to be, as to deny him the foreknowledge of things to come.

The whole prophetic part of ſcripture declares this perfection of God; every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch; they could not have this foreknowledge of themſelves; why might not many other men have the ſame inſight, if it were by nature? it muſt be from ſome ſuperior agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of divine illumination: prophecy muſt be totally expunged if this be denied; for the ſubjects of prophecy are things future; and no man is properly a prophet, but in prediction; now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come; and the foretelling of them, ſuppoſeth them not to be yet, but that they ſhall be in time; ſeveral ſuch predictions we have in ſcripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold that he would order ſecond cauſes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews; Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; that prince refers to God as the revealer of ſecrets, Dan. ii. 47. By the ſame reaſon that he knows one thing future by himſelf, and by the infiniteneſs of his knowledge before any cauſes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

Some future things are known by men; and we muſt allow God a greater knowledge than any creature. Future things in their cauſes may be known by angels and men, (as I ſaid before;) whoſever knows neceſſary cauſes, and the efficacy of them, may foretel the effects; and when he ſees the meeting and concurrence of ſeveral cauſes together, he may preſage what the conſequent effect will be

of ſuch a concurrence: ſo phyſicians foretel the progreſs of a diſeaſe, the increaſe or diminution of it by natural ſigns; and aſtronomers fortel eclipſes by their obſervation of the motion of heavenly bodies, many years before they happen, can they be hid from God, with whom are the reaſons of all things? an expert gardener by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the mouth when they will peep out their heads; and ſhall not God much more that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations ſhall be from thoſe principles? Now if God did know things only in their cauſes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to paſs, from every cauſe ſingly, and from the concurrence of many. Now as God is more excellent in being than his creature; ſo he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge and the manner of his knowledge; well then, ſhall a certain knowledge of ſomething future, and a conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men; and ſhall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come, be found no where, in no being? If the conjecture of future things ſavours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is then no ſuch thing in being as a perfect intelligent being, and ſo no God.

God knows his own decree and will, and therefore muſt needs know all future things. If any thing be future, or to come to paſs, it muſt be from itſelf or from God; not from itſelf, then it would be independant and abſolute; if it hath its futurity from God, then God muſt know what he hath decreed to come to paſs; thoſe things that are future in neceſſary cauſes, God muſt know, becauſe he willed them

them to be cauſes of ſuch effects; he therefore knows them, becauſe he knows what he willed: the knowledge of God cannot ariſe from the things themſelves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cauſe without him; and knowledge, which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God ſees things poſſible in the glaſs of his own power, ſo he ſees things future in the glaſs of his own will; in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to ſuffer them and diſpoſe of them: nothing can paſs out of the rank of things merely poſſible into the order of things future, before ſome act of God's will hath paſſed for its futurition.

It is not from the infiniteneſs of his own nature ſimply conſidered, that God knows things to be future; for as things are not future becauſe God is infinite, (for then all poſſible things ſhould be future) ſo neither is any thing known to be future only becauſe God is infinite, but becauſe God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come, is founded upon his appointment of things to come. In Iſa. xliv. 7. it is ſaid, *and who, as I, ſhall call and declare it, ſince I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?* Nothing is created or ordered in the world, but what God decreed to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exiſt in time; not the minuteſt part of the world could have exiſted without his will, not an action can be done without his will; as life, the principle, ſo motion, the fruit of that life, is by and from God; as he decreed life to this or that thing, ſo he decreed motion, as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from ſuch cauſes; for without ſuch a concourſe they could not have acted any thing, or produced any thing; and therefore as for

natural things, which we call neceſſary cauſes, God foreſeeing them all particularly in his own decree, foreſaw alſo all effects which muſt neceſſarily flow from them, becauſe ſuch cauſes cannot but act when they are furniſhed with all things neceſſary for action: he knows his own decrees, and therefore neceſſarily knows what he hath decreed, or elſe we muſt ſay things come to paſs whether God will or no; or, that he wills he knows not what; but this cannot be, for *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*, Acts xv. 18. Now this neceſſarily flows from that principle firſt laid down, that God knows himſelf, ſince nothing is future without God's will; if God did not future things, he would not know his own will; for as things poſſible could not be known by him, unleſs he knew the fulneſs of his own power; ſo things future could not be known by his underſtanding, unleſs he knew the reſolves of his own will.

Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men; God's knowledge of his works precedes his works, man's knowledge of God's works follows his works; juſt as an artificer's knowledge of a watch, inſtrument or engine, which he would make, is before his making it; he knows the motions of it, and the reaſon of thoſe motions before it is made, becauſe he knows what he hath determined to work; he knows not thoſe motions from the conſideration of them after they were made, as the ſpectator doth, who by viewing the inſtrument after it is made, gains a knowledge from the ſight and conſideration of it, till he underſtands the reaſon of the whole; ſo we know things from the conſideration of them after we ſee them in being, and therefore we know not future things. But God's knowledge doth not ariſe from things becauſe they are, but becauſe he wills them to be, and therefore he knows every thing that ſhall be, becauſe

cauſe it cannot be without his will, as the creator and maintainer of all things; knowing his own ſubſtance he knows all his works.

1. God knows by his own eſſence;—that is, he ſees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will; he knows them, not by viewing the things, but by viewing himſelf; his own eſſence is the mirror and book, wherein he beholds all things that he doth ordain, diſpoſe and execute; and ſo he knows all things in their firſt and original cauſe; which is no other than his own eſſence willing, and his own eſſence executing what he wills; he knows them in his power, as the phyſical principle; in his will, as the moral principle of things, as ſome ſpeak.

Thirdly, How God knows all things? In particular

He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of underſtanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to aſſiſt us with images of things, and to our ſenſes to convey them into our minds; God would then acquire a perfection from thoſe things which are below himſelf, and an excellency from thoſe things that are vile; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he underſtood by images, drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be ſomething in God which is not God, *viz.* the images of things drawn from outward objects: God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being; for to be underſtanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Beſides, if God's knowledge of his creatures, were derived from the creature, by the impreſſion of any thing upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, becauſe from eternity there was no actual exiſtence of any thing but himſelf; and therefore there could not be any images ſhot

out

out from any thing, becauſe there was not any thing in being but God; as there is no principle of being to any thing but by his eſſence; ſo there is no principle of the knowledge of any thing by himſelf but his eſſence. If the knowledge of God were diſtinct from his eſſence, his knowledge were not eternal, becauſe there is nothing eternal but his eſſence.

His underſtanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the ſame with his eſſence, becauſe of the ſimplicity of his nature; God is not made up of various parts, one diſtinct from another as we are, and therefore doth not underſtand by a part of himſelf, but by himſelf; ſo that to be, and to underſtand, is the ſame with God; his eſſence is not one thing, and the power whereby he underſtands, another; he would then be compounded, and not be the moſt ſimple being: this alſo is neceſſary for the perfection of God; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reaſon, is a more noble way of knowing, than knowledge by ſenſe; ſo it is more excellent for God to know by his eſſence, than by any thing without him, any thing mixed with him; the firſt would render him dependant, and the other would demoliſh his ſimplicity.

Again, the natures of all things are contained in God; not formally, for then the nature of the creatures would be God: but eminently; *he that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear? he that formed the eye, ſhall he not ſee?* Pſa. xciv. 9. He hath in himſelf eminently the beauty, perfection, life, and vigor of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himſelf, but every thing with ſome foot-ſteps of himſelf in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been any thing in them

them contrary to his own goodneſs; and therefore as his eſſence primarily repreſents itſelf, ſo it repreſents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the eſſence of God is eminently all things, ſo by underſtanding his eſſence, he eminently underſtands all things. And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himſelf, and another knowledge of the creatures; but by knowing himſelf, as the original and exemplary cauſe of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cauſe of; ſo that he knows all things, not by an underſtanding of them, but by an underſtanding of himſelf; by underſtanding his own power as the efficient of them, his own will as the orderer of them, his own goodneſs as the adorner and beautifier of them, his own wiſdom as the diſpoſer of them, and his own holineſs, to which many of their actions are contrary.

As he ſees all things poſſible in his own power, becauſe he is able to produce them; ſo he ſees all things future in his own will, decreeing to effect them, if they be good, or decreeing to permit them, if they be evil. In this glaſs he ſees what he will give being to, and what he will ſuffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himſelf, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures; he knows all things in himſelf. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be; he knows all things by one comprehenſion of the cauſes in himſelf.

2. God knows all things by one act of intuition. —This the ſchools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other; for if he know by his own eſſence, he knows all things by one act, there would be otherwiſe a diviſion in his eſſence, a firſt and a laſt, a nearneſs and a diſtance. As what he made, he made by one word; ſo what he ſees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity:

nity: as he wills all things by one act of his will, ſo he knows all things by one act of his underſtanding: he knows not ſome things diſcurſively from other things, nor knows one thing ſucceſſively after another. As by one act he imparts eſſence to things; ſo by one act he knows the nature of things.

He doth not know by diſcourſe, as we do.—That is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational concluſions and arguing one thing from another, and ſpringing up various conſequences from ſome principle aſſented to; but God ſtands in no need of reaſonings; the making inferences and abſtracting things, would be ſtains in the infinite perfection of God; here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the conſequence and concluſion, till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and ſo he would have an ignorance, then a knowledge; and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects; as it is in human underſtandings. But God knows all things before they did exiſt, and never was ignorant of them, Acts xv. 18. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as it doth in the way of human reaſoning. Though indeed ſome make a virtual diſcourſe in God; that is, though God hath a ſimple knowledge, yet it doth virtually contain a diſcourſe by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power, he knows what things are poſſible to be made by him; and from the knowledge of himſelf, he paſſes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and becauſe of our weakneſs they are apprehended

prehended as two diſtinct acts in God, one of which is the reaſon of another: as we ſay that one attribute is the reaſon of another; as his mercy, may be ſaid to be the reaſon of his patience; and his omnipreſence, to be the reaſon of the knowledge of preſent things done in the world. God indeed by one ſimple act, knows himſelf and the creatures; but when that act whereby he knows himſelf, is conceived by us to paſs to the knowledge of the creatures, we muſt not underſtand it to be a new act, diſtinct from the other; but the ſame act upon different terms or objects; ſuch an order is in our underſtandings and conceptions, not in God's.

Nor doth he know ſucceſſively, as we do.—That is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former; a knowledge of all things without diſcourſe, is a knowledge without ſucceſſion. The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge doth not beget another; in regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another, one is the cauſe, the other is the effect: in the creatures there is ſuch a ſucceſſion, and God knows there will be ſuch a ſucceſſion; but there is no ſuch order in God's knowledge; for he knows all thoſe ſucceſſions by one glance, without any ſucceſſion of knowledge in himſelf.

Man in his view of things, muſt turn ſometimes his body, ſometimes only his eyes; he cannot ſee all the contents of a letter at once, and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he muſt turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and ſo ſpin out one thing after another by ſeveral acts and motions. We behold a great part of the ſea at once, but not all the dimenſions of it; for to know the length of the ſea, we move our eyes one way; to ſee the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the

depth

depth of it, we may have another motion of them. And when we caſt our eyes up to heaven, we ſeem to receive in at an inſtant the whole tent of the hemiſphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot diſtinctly view what we ſee in a lump, without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without ſucceſſion of time. And certainly the underſtanding of angels is bounded, according to the meaſure of their beings; ſo that it cannot extend itſelf at one time, to a quantity of objects, to make a diſtinct application of them, but the objects muſt preſent themſelves one by one: but God is all eye, all underſtanding; as there is no ſucceſſion in his eſſence, ſo there is none in his knowledge; his underſtanding in the nature, and in the act, is infinite, as it is in the text. He therefore ſees eternally and univerſally, all things, by one act, without any motion, much leſs various motions; the various changes of things, in their ſubſtance, quality, places and relations, withdraw not any thing from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge; he doth not upon conſideration of preſent things turn his mind from paſt; or when he beholds future things, turn his mind from preſent; but he ſees them not one after another, but all at once, and all together; the whole circle of his own counſels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the center of his will, to the circumference of his creatures; juſt as if a man was able in one moment to read a whole library; or, as if you ſhould imagine a tranſparent cryſtal globe, hung up in the midſt of a room, and ſo framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fret-work in the ceiling, the inlaid parts of the floor, and the particular parts of the tapeſtry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once in it. As the ſun by one light and heat frames ſenſible things, ſo God by one

one ſimple act knows all things: as he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a ſpiritual knowledge; ſo he knows many things by one knowledge, Heb. iv. 13. *All things are open and naked to him,* more than any one thing can be to us; and therefore he views all things at once, as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the father of lights, a God of infinite underſtanding, there is no variableneſs in his mind, nor any ſhadow of turning of his eye, as there is of ours, to behold various things, James i. 17. his knowledge before eternal, includes all times; there is nothing paſt or future with him, and therefore he beholds all things by one and the ſame manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment.

This muſt needs be ſo, becauſe of the eminency of God.—God is above all, and therefore cannot but ſee the motions of all. He that ſits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, ſees all things, all perſons, by one aſpect he comprehends the whole circle of the place; whereas he that ſits below, when he looks before, he cannot ſee things behind; God being above all, about all, in all, ſees at once the motions of all. The whole world in the eye of God, is leſs than a point that divides one ſentence from another in a book; as a cypher, a *grain of duſt,* Iſa. xl. 15. ſo little a thing can be ſeen by man at once; and all things being as little in the eye of God, are ſeen at once by him. As all time is but as a moment to his eternity, ſo all things are but as a point to the immenſity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more eaſe than we can move or turn our eye.

Becauſe all the perfections of knowing, are united in God.—As particular ſenſes are divided in man, by one he ſees, by another he hears, by another he ſmells, yet all thoſe are united in one common

common ſenſe, and this common ſenſe apprehends all; ſo the various and diſtinct ways of knowledge in the creatures are all eminently united in God. A man when he ſees a grain of wheat, underſtands at once all things that can in time proceed from that ſeed; ſo God by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which ſhall in time be unfolded by him. We have a ſhadow of this way of knowledge in our own underſtanding; the ſenſe only perceives a thing preſent, and one object only proper and ſuitable to it; as the eye ſees colour, the ear hears ſounds; we ſee this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the underſtanding abſtracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree; and ſo in a manner beholds and underſtands all men at once, by underſtanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the ſenſe and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaſter perfection in the underſtanding of God. As to know, is ſimply better than not to know at all; ſo to know by one act comprehenſive, is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by ſucceſſion to receive information, and to have an increaſe or decreaſe of knowledge, to be like a bucket, always deſcending into the well, and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakneſs that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon one no more than upon another.

3. God knows all things independently.—This is eſſential to an infinite underſtanding. He receives not his knowledge from any thing without him, he hath no tutor to inſtruct him, or book to inform him; *who hath been his counſellor?* ſaith the prophet, Iſa. xl. 13. he hath no need of the counſels of others, nor of the inſtructions of others. This follows upon the firſt and ſecond propoſitions; if he

he knows thing by his eſſence, then as his eſſence is independent from the creatures, ſo is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature, hath no ſpecies or pictures of things in his underſtanding, as we have; no beams from the creature ſtrike upon him, to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world: the earth ſends not light to the ſun, but the ſun to the earth.

Our knowledge indeed depends upon the object, but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will: we could not know creatures unleſs they were; but creatures could not be, unleſs God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cauſe of his will, ſo nothing that he knows is the cauſe of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them: who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the duſt, is the cauſe that the foot ſtands in this or that particular place?

If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the exiſtence of things did precede God's knowledge; to ſay that they are the cauſe of God's knowledge, is to ſay, that God was not the cauſe of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power, he created he knew not what, till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependant upon them, it could not be eternal, but muſt have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer a date than ſince the nature of things was in actual exiſtence; for whatſoever is a cauſe of knowledge, doth precede the knowledge it cauſes, either in order of time, or order of nature; temporal things therefore cannot be the cauſe of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, if his knowledge commenced with the exiſtence of his

works, if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive a knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things *in wiſdom*, Pſa. civ. 24. how can this be imagined, if the things known were the cauſe of his knowledge, and ſo before his knowledge, and therefore before his action? God would not then be the firſt in the order of knowing agents, becauſe he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted, and ſo the creature which he made, would be before the act of his underſtanding whereby he knew what he made.

Again, ſince knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himſelf; if his perfection in knowledge were gained from any thing without himſelf and below himſelf, he would not be ſufficient of himſelf, but be under an indigence, which wanted a ſupply from the things he had made; and could not be eternally perfect till he had created, and ſeen the effects of his own power, goodneſs and wiſdom, to render him more wiſe and knowing in time than he was from eternity; who can fancy ſuch a God as this, without deſtroying the deity he pretends to adore? for if his underſtanding be perfected by ſomething without him, why may not his eſſence be perfected by ſomething without him; that as he was made knowing by ſomething without him, he might be made God by ſomething without him?

How could his underſtanding be infinite, if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cauſe? Is the majeſty of God to be debaſed to a mendicant condition, to ſeek for a ſupply from things inferior to himſelf? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly ſhould be aſſiſtant to the knowledge of God? that

that the moſt noble Being ſhould be perfected by things ſo vile, that the ſupreme cauſe of all things ſhould receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his underſtanding, by the notion of things ſo mean? To conclude this particular, all things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himſelf, and his own eſſence.

4. God knows all things diſtinctly.—His underſtanding is infinite in regard of clearneſs; *God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all,* John i. 5. he ſees not through a miſt or cloud; there is no blemiſh in his underſtanding, no mote or beam in his eye, to render any thing obſcure to him. Man diſcerns the ſurface and outſide of things, little or nothing of the eſſence of things; we ſee the nobleſt things, but *as in a glaſs darkly,* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. the too great nearneſs, as well as the too great diſtance of a thing, hinders our ſight; the ſmallneſs of a mote eſcapes our eye, and ſo our knowledge; alſo the weakneſs of our underſtanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confuſedly. But God knows the forms and eſſence of things, every circumſtance; nothing is ſo deep, but he ſees to the bottom; he ſees the maſs, and ſees the motes of beings; his underſtanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or diſtracted with the variety of them; he diſcerns every thing infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge: what knowledge they had, was from him; he hath therefore infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. All things are *open to him,* Heb. iv. 13. the leaſt fibre in its nakedneſs and diſtinct frame, is tranſparent to him; as by help of glaſſes, the mouth, feet, hands of a ſmall inſect, are viſible to man, which ſeem to the eye, without

that aſſiſtance, one intire piece, not diverſified into parts. All the cauſes, qualities, natures, properties of things are open to him, *he brings out the hoſt of heaven by number, and calleth them by names,* Iſa. xl. 26. he numbers the hairs of our heads; what more diſtinct than number? thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap: he knows, and none elſe can, every thing in its true and intimate cauſes, in its original and intermediate cauſes; in himſelf, as the cauſe of every particular of their being, every property in their being.

Knowledge by the cauſes is the moſt noble and perfect knowledge, and moſt ſuited to the infinite excellency of the divine being; he created all things, and ordered them to a univerſal and particular end; he therefore knows the eſſential properties of every thing, every activity of their nature, all their fitneſs for thoſe diſtinct ends, to which he orders them, and for which he governs and diſpoſeth them; and underſtands their darkeſt and moſt hidden qualities, infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the ſun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them diſtinctly, and therefore knows them diſtinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is ſaid, Gen. i. 31. *to ſee every thing that he hath made*; he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good: to pronounce that good, which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not conſiſted with his veracity; for every one that ſpeaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he ſpeaks truth, is a liar in ſpeaking that which is true. God knows every act of his own will, whether it be poſitive or permiſſive, and therefore every effect of his will. We muſt needs aſcribe to God a perfect knowledge; but a confuſed knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a heap,

heap, is unworthy of the divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows diſtinctly the means whereby he will bring them to thoſe ends for which he hath appointed them: no wiſe man intends an end, without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance then of any thing in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a divine end, (and there is nothing in the world but doth) would be inconſiſtent with the perfection of God; it would aſcribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and eſſence, ſo there can be nothing imperfect in his underſtanding and knowledge; and therefore not a confuſed knowledge, which is an imperfection. *Darkneſs and light are both alike to him,* Pſa. cxxxix. 12. he ſees diſtinctly into the one, as well as the other; what is darkneſs to us, is not ſo to him.

5. God knows all things infallibly.—His underſtanding is infinite, in regard of certainty; every tittle of what he knows, is as far from failing, as what he ſpeaks; our Saviour affirms the one, Mat. v. 18. and there is the ſame reaſon of the certainty of one as well as the other; his eſſence is the meaſure of his knowledge; whence it is as impoſſible that God ſhould be miſtaken in the knowledge of the leaſt thing in the world, as it is that he ſhould be miſtaken in his own eſſence; for knowing himſelf comprehenſively, he muſt know all other things infallibly; ſince he is eſſentially omniſcient, he is no more capable of error in his underſtanding, than of imperfection in his eſſence; his counſels are as unerring as his eſſence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his eſſence is free from defect.

Again, ſince God knows all things with a knowledge of viſion, becauſe he wills them; his knowledge muſt be as infallible as his purpoſe; now his

purpoſe will certainly be effected; *what he hath thought ſhall come to paſs, and what he hath purpoſed ſhall ſtand*, Iſa. xiv. 24. *His counſel ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure*, Iſa. xlvi. 10. There may be interruptions of nature, the foundations of it may be out of courſe, but there can be no bar upon the Author of nature; he hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the reſolves of his own will; he can effect what he pleaſes by a word. Speech is one of the leaſt motions; yet when God ſaid, *let there be light*, there was light, ariſing from darkneſs. No reaſon can be given why God knows a thing to be, but becauſe he infallibly wills it to be.

Again, the ſchools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived; for that is repugnant to their bleſſed ſtate; for deceit is an evil and an imperfection, inconſiſtent with that perfect bleſſedneſs the good angels are poſſeſſed of; and would it not much more be a ſtain upon the bleſſedneſs of that God that is bleſſed for ever, to be ſubject to deceit? his knowledge therefore is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the queſtion propoſed rather than to the other. If things did not come to paſs therefore as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and ſince he knows by his eſſence, his eſſence alſo would be imperfect, if God were expoſed to any deceit in his knowledge; he knows by himſelf, who is the higheſt truth, and therefore it is impoſſible he ſhould err in his underſtanding.

6. God knows immutably.—His underſtanding elſe could not be infinite; every thing and every act that is mutable, is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. There is a change in the underſtanding when we gain the knowledge of a thing, which

which was unknown to us before; or when we actually conſider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it; or, when we know that diſtinctly, which before we knew confuſedly. None of theſe can be aſcribed to God, without a manifeſt diſparagement of his infiniteneſs: our knowledge indeed is always arriving to us or flowing from us; we paſs from one degree to another, from worſe to better, or from better to worſe: but God loſes nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain any thing by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he would grow wiſer than he was, he was not then perfectly wiſe before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the underſtanding exerciſed about them; the wheel moves round; the ſpokes that are loweſt are preſently higheſt, and preſently return to be low again; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motion of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increaſe or decreaſe, than his eſſence doth; ſince God knows by his eſſence, and the eſſence of God is God himſelf, his knowledge muſt be void of any change. The knowledge of poſſible things ariſing from the knowledge of his own power cannot be changed, unleſs his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent; the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, becauſe that knowledge ariſeth from his will, which is irreverſible, *The counſel of the Lord that ſhall ſtand*, Prov. xix. 21. So that if God can never decay into weakneſs, and never turn to inconſtancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do, and both theſe being immutable, his knowledge muſt conſequently be ſo too. It was not neceſſary that this or that creature ſhould be, and therefore it was not neceſſary that God ſhould know this or that creature

with a knowledge of viſion; but after the will of God had determined the exiſtence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did neceſſarily continue unchangeable. God therefore knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world he ſhall know no more than he doth now, and from eternity he knows no leſs than he doth now, and ſhall do to eternity. Though things paſs into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them, for he knows them as well before they were, as when they are; and knows them as well when they are paſt, as when they are preſent.

7. God knows all things perpetually, *i. e.* in act. —Since he knows by his eſſence, he always knows, becauſe his eſſence never ceaſeth, but is a pure act; ſo that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men that have the knowledge of ſome art or ſcience have it always in habit, though when they are aſleep they have it not in act: a muſician hath the habit of muſic, but doth not ſo much as think of it when his ſenſes are bound up: but God is "an unſleepy eye," he never ſlumbers nor ſleeps; he never ſlumbers, in regard of his providence, and therefore never ſlumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himſelf, nor any other creature more perfectly at one time than another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the ſun is in the act of ſhining; the ſun never ceaſed to ſhine in one or other part of the world, ſince it was firſt fixed in the heavens; nor God to be in the act of knowledge ſince he was God; and therefore ſince he always was, and always will be God, he always was, and always will be in the act of knowledge; always knowing his own eſſence, he muſt always actually know what hath been gone and ceaſed from being, and what ſhall come and ariſe into being: as a watchmaker knows what watch he intends to make, and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces, or conſumed by the fire, he ſtill knows it, becauſe he

knows

knows the copy of it in his own mind; ſome therefore in regard of this perpetual act of the divine knowledge, have called God not *intellectus* but the Intellection of Intellections. We have no proper Engliſh word to expreſs the act of the underſtanding; as his power is co-eternal with him, ſo is his knowledge; all times paſt, preſent, and to come, are embraced in the boſom of his underſtanding; he fixed all things in their ſeaſons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old paſſes from him. What is done in a thouſand years, is as actually preſent with his knowledge as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours; ſince *a thouſand years are no more to God than a day*, or *a watch in the night is to us*. God is in the higheſt degree of being, and therefore in the higheſt degree of underſtanding. Knowledge is one of the moſt perfect acts in any creature; God therefore hath all actual, as well as eſſential and habitual knowledge—*his underſtanding his infinite*.

Fourthly, Reaſons to prove that God knows all things.

1. God muſt know what any creature knows, and more than any creature knows.—There is nothing done in the world, but is known by ſome creature or other; every action is at leaſt known by the perſon that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together; and every creature is known by him, ſince every creature is made by him: and as God works all things by an infinite power, ſo he knows all things by an infinite underſtanding.

The perfection of God requires this.—All perfections that include no eſſential defect are formally in God; but knowledge includes no eſſential defect in itſelf, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itſelf, is deſirable, and an excellency; ignorance is a defect; it is impoſſible that the leaſt grain of defect

defect can be found in the moſt perfect being. Since God is wiſe, he muſt be knowing; for wiſdom muſt have knowledge for the baſis of it. A creature can no more be wiſe without knowledge, than he can be active without ſtrength. Now God is *only wiſe*, Rom. xvi. 27. and therefore only knowing in the higheſt degree of knowledge, incomprehenſibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, becauſe infinite.

Again, the more ſpiritual any thing is, the more underſtanding it is. The dull body underſtands nothing; ſenſe perceives, but the underſtanding faculty is ſeated in the ſoul, which is of a ſpiritual nature, which knows things that are preſent, remembers things that are paſt, foreſees many things to come. What is the property of a ſpiritual nature, muſt be in a moſt eminent manner, in the ſupreme ſpirit of the world, that is, in the higheſt degree of ſpirituality, and moſt remote from any matter.

Again, nothing can enjoy other things, but by ſome kind of underſtanding them; God hath the higheſt enjoyment of himſelf, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them; nothing of perfection and bleſſedneſs can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not conſiſt with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance: God therefore doth perfectly know himſelf. The moſt noble manner of acting muſt be aſcribed to God, as being the moſt noble and excellent being; to act by knowledge, is the moſt excellent manner of acting; God hath therefore, not only knowledge, but the moſt excellent manner of knowledge; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, ſo it is better to know in the moſt excellent manner, than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge; his knowledge therefore muſt be every way as perfect as his eſſence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature muſt have an infinite knowledge:

knowledge: a God ignorant of any thing, cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

2. All the knowledge in any creature is from God.—And you muſt allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of knowledge any creature hath, come from God; and all the knowledge in every creature, that ever was, is, or ſhall be in the whole maſs, was derived from him. If all thoſe ſeveral drops in particular creatures, were collected into one ſpirit, into one creature, it would be an inconceivable knowledge, yet ſtill lower than what the author of all that knowledge hath; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himſelf; nor is the creature capable of receiving ſo much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving ſo much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty; ſo it is incapable of receiving ſo much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God. Nothing can be made by God equal to him in any thing; if any thing could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cauſe of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have, is an argument God uſes for the aſſerting the greatneſs of his own knowledge, Pſa. xciv. 10. *He that teaches man knowledge, ſhall be not know?* Man hath here knowledge aſcribed to him; the author of this knowledge is God, he furniſheth him with it, and therefore doth in a higher manner poſſeſs it; and much more than can fall under the comprehenſion of any creature; as the ſun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itſelf than it darts upon the earth or heavens; and ſhall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehenſive?

3. The

3. The accuſations of conſcience, evidence God's knowledge of all actions of all his creatures.—Doth not conſcience check for the moſt ſecret ſins, to which none are privy but a man's ſelf; the whole world beſide being ignorant of his crime? do not the fears of another judge gall the heart? If a judgment above him be feared, an underſtanding above him diſcerning their ſecrets is confeſſed by thoſe fears; whence can thoſe horrors ariſe, if there be not a ſuperior that underſtands and records the crime? What perfection of the divine being can this relate unto, but omniſcience? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this?

The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible, that there is *one greater than our hearts*, in reſpect of our knowledge, who *knows all things*, 1 John iii. 20. Conſcience would be a vain principle, and ſtingleſs without this; it would be an eaſy matter to ſilence all its accuſations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its ſevereſt frowns. What need any trouble themſelves, if none knows their crimes but themſelves? Concealed ſins, gnawing the conſcience, are arguments of God's omniſcience of all preſent and paſt actions.

4. God is the firſt cauſe of every thing, every creature in his production.—Since all creatures, from the higheſt angel to the loweſt worm, exiſt by the power of God; if God underſtands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him, that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him, that his power is able to produce. If God knows nothing beſides himſelf he may then believe there is nothing beſides himſelf; we ſhall then fancy a God miſerably miſtaken: if he knows nothing beſides himſelf, then things were not created by him, or not underſtandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware. To think that the

firſt cauſe of all ſhould be ignorant of thoſe things he is the cauſe of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore neceſſary; and then the creature came from him as light from the ſun, and moiſture from the water; this would be an abſurd opinion of the world's creation; if God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he muſt be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature, without that of underſtanding alſo: if God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge muſt extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unleſs we imagine God hath loſt his memory, in that long tract of time ſince the firſt creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work; if God knows himſelf, he knows himſelf to be a cauſe; how can he know himſelf to be a cauſe, unleſs he knows the effects he is the cauſe of? One relation implies another; a man cannot know himſelf to be a father, unleſs he hath a child, becauſe it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cauſe is a name of relation, and implies an effect; if God therefore knows himſelf in all his perfections, as the cauſe of things, he muſt know all his acts, what his wiſdom contrived, what his counſel determined, and what his power effected. The knowledge of God is to be ſuppoſed in a free determination of himſelf; and that knowledge muſt be perfect, both of the object, act, and all the circumſtances of it. How can his will freely produce any thing that was not firſt known in his underſtanding? From this the prophet argues the underſtanding of God, and the unſearchableneſs of it, becauſe he is the *Creator of the ends of the earth*, Iſa. xl. 28. and the ſame reaſon David gives of God's knowledge of him, and of every thing he did, and that *afar off*, becauſe he was *formed by him*, Pſa. cxxxix. 2, 15, 16. As the perfect making of things only belongs to God, ſo doth the perfect knowledge of things; it is abſurd to think

think that God ſhould be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he ſhould not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues; as that a man ſhould not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Every thing bears in itſelf the mark of God's perfections; and ſhall not God know the repreſentation of his own virtue?

5. Without this knowledge, God could no more be the governor, than he could be the creator of the world.—Knowledge is the baſis of providence; to know things, is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing could be directed to its proper end, without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its ſuitableneſs to anſwer that end for which it is intended. As every thing, even the minuteſt, falls under the conduct of God, ſo every thing falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horſes, and direct them in right paths: ſince the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge muſt be about particulars; he could not elſe govern them in particular; nor could all things be ſaid to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exerciſe of it upon the goodneſs of God; it cannot be without underſtanding and will; underſtanding, to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore ſpeaks of providence, he intimates theſe two in a ſpecial manner, *your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of theſe things,* Mat. vi. 32. *and goodneſs,* in Luke xi. 13. The reaſon of providence is ſo joined with omniſcience, that they cannot be ſeparated: what a kind of God would he be that were ignorant of thoſe things that were governed by him? The aſcribing this perfection to him, aſſerts his providence; for it is as eaſy for one that knows all things,

to

to look over the whole world, if writ with monoſyllables, in every little particular of it, as it is with a man to take a view of every letter in an alphabet.

Again, if God was not omniſcient, how could he reward the good, and puniſh the evil? the works of men are either rewardable or puniſhable; not only according to their outward circumſtances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. The exact diſcerning of theſe, without a poſſibility to be deceived, is neceſſary to paſs a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the cenſure and puniſhment to the crime: without ſuch a knowledge and diſcerning, men would not have their due; nay, a judgment juſt for the matter, would be unjuſt in the manner, becauſe unjuſtly paſt, without an underſtanding of the merit of the cauſe. It is neceſſary therefore that the ſupreme Judge of the world ſhould not be thought to be blindfold, when he diſtributes his rewards and puniſhments, and muffle his face when he paſſes his ſentence. It is neceſſary to aſcribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions; the ſecret wills and aims; the hidden works of darkneſs in every man's conſcience, becauſe every man's work is to be meaſured by the will and inward frame. It is neceſſary that he ſhould perpetually retain all thoſe things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a juſt proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God to diſcover the ſecrets of all hearts at laſt, as 1 Cor. iv. 5. *The Lord ſhall bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of all hearts, and then ſhall every man have praiſe of God.* This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reaſon why the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in judgment, is becauſe God knows their ways, which is implied in his knowing the way of the righteous.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, I now proceed to the Uſe of all to ourſelves.

1. Of information. If God hath all knowledge, then

Jeſus Chriſt is not a mere creature.—The two titles of *wonderful Counſellor*, and *mighty God*, are given him in conjunction, Iſa. ix. 6. not only the *angel of the covenant*, as he is called, Mal. iii. 1. the executor of his counſels, but a counſellor, in conjunction with him in counſel as well as power: this title is ſuperior to any title given to the prophets in regard of their predictions; and therefore I ſhould take it rather as the note of his perfect underſtanding, than of his perfect teaching and diſcovering; as Calvin doth: he is not only the revealer of what he knows, ſo were the prophets according to their meaſures; but the counſellor of what he revealed, having a perfect underſtanding of all the counſels of God, as being intereſted in them, as the mighty God. He calls himſelf by the peculiar title of God, and declares that he will manifeſt himſelf by this prerogative to all the churches, Rev. ii. 23. *And all the churches ſhall know that I am he, which ſearcheth the reins and hearts*, the moſt hidden operations of the minds of men that lie locked up from the view of all the world beſides. And this was no new thing to him, after his aſcenſion; for the ſame perfection he had in the time of his earthly fleſh, Luke vi. 8. *he knew their thoughts*; his eyes are therefore compared, Cant. v. 12. to *doves eyes*, which are clear and quick; and to *a flame of fire*, Rev. i. 14. not only heat to conſume his enemies, but light to diſcern their contrivances againſt the church; he pierceth, by his knowledge, into all parts, as fire pierceth into the cloſeſt particle of iron, and ſeparates between the moſt united parts of metals; and ſome tell us, he is called a roe, from the perſpicacity of his ſight, as well as from the ſwiftneſs of his motion.

He

He hath a perfect knowledge of the Father; he knows the Father, and none elſe knows the Father; angels know God, men know God, but Chriſt in a peculiar manner knows the Father; *no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, ſave the Son,* Mat. xi. 27. he knows ſo, as that he learns not from any other; he doth perfectly comprehend him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue; not becauſe of any incapacity in God to reveal, but the incapacity of the creature to receive; finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinite; ſo that Chriſt cannot be *Deus factus*, made of a creature a God, to comprehend God; for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, becauſe *he ſearches the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. that is, comprehends them, as the ſpirit of a man doth the things of a man (now the ſpirit of a man underſtands what it thinks, and what it wills) ſo the Spirit of God underſtands what is in the underſtanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an abſolute knowledge aſcribed to him, and ſuch as could not be aſcribed to any thing but a divinity: now if the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and takes from Chriſt what he ſhews to us of him, John xvi. 15. he cannot be ignorant of thoſe things himſelf; he muſt know the depths of God that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counſels of the Father's will; ſince he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himſelf infinite; for God whoſe eſſence is infinite, is infinitely knowable; but no created underſtanding can infinitely know God. The infiniteneſs of the object hinders it from being underſtood by any thing that is not infinite. Though a creature ſhould underſtand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore ſaid to underſtand God

himſelf: as though I may underſtand all the volitions and motions of my ſoul, yet it doth not follow that therefore I underſtand the whole nature and ſubſtance of my ſoul; or if a man underſtood all the effects of the ſun, that therefore he underſtands fully the nature of the ſun. But Chriſt knows the Father, he lay in the boſom of the Father, was in the greateſt intimacy with him, John i. 18. and from this intimacy with him, he ſaw him and knew him; ſo he knows God as much as he is knowable; and therefore knows him perfectly as the Father knows himſelf by a comprehenſive viſion; this is the knowledge of God wherein properly the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding appears: and our Saviour uſes ſuch expreſſions which manifeſt his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and ſuch a manner of knowledge of the Father as the Father hath of him.

2. Chriſt knows all creatures.——That knowledge which comprehends God, comprehends all created things as they are in God; it is a knowledge that ſinks to the depths of his will, and therefore extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence; by knowing the Father he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power and will of God; *whatſoever the Father doth, that the Son doth,* John v. 19. As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cauſe of, ſo doth the Son know all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, ſo doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the ſame, the knowledge is the ſame. Now the Father did not create one thing, and Chriſt another; *but all things were created by him, and for him: all things both in heaven and earth,* Col. i. 16. as he knows himſelf as the cauſe of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him; he knows all creatures in God, as he knows

knows the eſſence of God, and knows all creature in themſelves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power; thoſe things muſt be in his knowledge that were in his power, *all the treaſures of the wiſdom and knowledge* of God are *hid in him*, Col. ii. 3. Now it is not the wiſdom of God to know in part, and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of any thing, ſince there is *nothing but what was made by him*, John i. 3. and ſince it is leſs to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. If he be the creator, he cannot but be the diſcerner of what he made; this is a part of wiſdom belonging to an artificer to know the nature and quality of what he makes. Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furniſheth with being, and with various endowments, he muſt know them not only univerſally but particularly

3. Chriſt knows the hearts and affections of men. —Peter ſcruples not to aſcribe to him this knowledge, among the knowledge of all other things, John xxi. 17. *Lord thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* From Chriſt's knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and diſpoſitions of men. To ſearch the heart, is the ſole prerogative of God, 1 Kings viii. 39. *For thou, even thou only knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men:* ſhall we take *only* here with a limitation, as ſome that are no friends to the deity of Chriſt would, and ſay, God only knows the hearts of men from himſelf, and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take *only* in other places with a limitation, and make nonſenſe of it, as Pſa. lxxxvi. 10. *Thou art God alone.* It is to be underſtood, that God is God alone from himſelf, but other gods may be made by him, and ſo there may be numberleſs infinites? as God is God alone, ſo that none can be God but himſelf; ſo he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his na-

ture. The reaſon why God knows the hearts of men, is rendered in the ſcripture double, becauſe he *created them*, and becauſe he is *preſent every where*, Pſa. xxxiii. 13, 15. theſe two are by the confeſſion of Chriſtians and Pagans univerſally received as the proper characters of divinity, whereby the deity is diſtinguiſhed from all creatures. Now when Chriſt aſcribes this to himſelf, and that with ſuch an emphaſis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth, Rev. ii. 23. we muſt conclude that he is of the ſame eſſence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men; there is the unity of God: Chriſt ſearches the hearts and reins; there is a diſtinction of perſons in a oneneſs of eſſence; he knows the hearts of all men, not only of thoſe that were with him in the time of his fleſh, that have been and ſhall be, ſince his aſcenſion; but of thoſe that lived and died before his coming, becauſe he is to be the judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth, as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him as a judge, to know diſtinctly the merits of the cauſe of which he is to judge; and this excellency of ſearching the hearts is mentioned by himſelf with relation to his judicial proceeding, *I will give to every one of you according to your works.* And though a creature may know what is in a man's heart, if it be revealed to him, yet ſuch a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inſpection; yet this latter is aſcribed to Chriſt, John ii. 24. 25. *He knew all men, and needed not that any ſhould teſtify of man, for he knew what was in man*; he looked into their hearts. The evangeliſt to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour's knowledge of the inward falſity of thoſe that made a ſplendid profeſſion of him, doth not ſay, the Father revealed it to him; but intimates it to be an inſeparable property of his nature.

nature. No covering was ſo thick as to bound his eye; no pretence ſo glittering as to impoſe upon his underſtanding. Thoſe that made a profeſſion of him, and could not be diſcerned by the eye of man from his moſt faithful attendants, were in their inſide known to him plainer than their outſide was to others; and therefore he committed not himſelf to them, though they ſeemed to be perſuaded to a real belief in his name, becauſe of the power of his miracles; and were touched with an admiration of him, as ſome great prophet, and perhaps declared him to be the Meſſiah, ver. 23.

4. He had a foreknowledge of the particular inclinations of men, before thoſe diſtinct inclinations were in actual being in them.—This is plainly aſſerted, John vi. 64. *But there are ſome of you that believe not, for Jeſus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who ſhould betray him.* When Chriſt aſſured them from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that ſome of them were void of that faith they profeſſed, the evangeliſt to ſtop their amazement, that Chriſt ſhould have ſuch a power and virtue, adds, that he knew from the beginning, that he had not only a preſent knowledge, but a foreknowledge of every one's inclination; he knew not only now and then what was in the hearts of his diſciples, but from the beginning of any giving up their names to him, he knew whether it were a pretence or ſincere; he knew who ſhould betray him, and there was no man's inward affection but was foreſeen by him. From the beginning, whether we underſtand it from the beginning of the world, as when Chriſt ſaith concerning divorces, *from the beginning it was not ſo*, i. e. from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature; or from the beginning of their attending him; as it is taken, Luke i. 2. he had a certain preſcience of the inward diſpoſitions of men's hearts, and their ſucceeding ſentiments; he

foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midſt of his ſplendid profeſſion; and diſcerned his reſolution in the root, and his thought in the confuſed chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would ſpring up, before it did ſpring up, before Judas had any diſtinct and formal conception of it himſelf, or before there was any actual preparation to a reſolve. Peter's denial was not unknown to him, when Peter had a preſent reſolution, and no queſtion ſpake it in the preſent ſincerity of his ſoul, never to forſake him; he foreknew what would be the reſult of that poiſon which lurked in Peter's nature, before Peter himſelf imagined any thing of it; he diſcerned Peter's apoſtatizing heart, when Peter reſolved the contrary; our Saviour's prediction was accompliſhed, and Peter's valiant reſolution languiſhed into cowardice.

Shall we then conclude our bleſſed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures, who had all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge, who knew the inward motions of men's hearts by his own virtue, and had not only a preſent knowledge, but a preſcience of them?

God's Wisdom.

Romans xvi. 27.

TO GOD ONLY WISE BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR EVER, AMEN.

THIS chapter being the laſt of the epiſtle, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly ſalutations and commendations of particular perſons, according to the earlineſs and ſtrength of their ſeveral graces, and their labour of love for the intereſt of God and his people.

In ver. 17. he warns them not to be drawn aſide from the goſpel doctrine, which had been taught them, by the plauſible pretences and inſinuations, which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Chriſt, never want from the ſuggeſtions of their carnal wiſdom. The brats of ſoul-deſtroying errors, may walk about the world in a garb and diſguiſe of good words, and fair ſpeeches, as it is in the 18th ver. *By good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple.* And for their encouragement to a conſtancy in the goſpel doctrine, he aſſures them, that all thoſe that would diſpoſſeſs them of truth, to poſſeſs them with vanity, are but ſatan's inſtruments, and will fall under the ſame captivity and yoke with their principal; ver. 18. *The God of Peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly.*

In the words there are—1. An appropriation of wiſdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures; *only wiſe God.*—2. A glorifying him for it.

The point I ſhall inſiſt upon, is, that wiſdom is a tranſcendent excellency of the divine nature. We have before ſpoken of the knowledge of God, and the infiniteneſs of it: the next attribute is the wiſdom of God. Moſt confound the knowledge and wiſdom of God together; but there is a manifeſt diſtinction between them in our conception.

I ſhall handle it thus;

1. Shew what wiſdom is.

2. Then lay down ſome propoſitions about the wiſdom of God.

3. And ſhew that God is wiſe, and only wiſe.

4. Wherein his wiſdom appears.

5. The uſe.

Firſt, What wiſdom is.—Wiſdom among the Greeks, firſt ſignified an eminent perfection in any art or myſtery; ſo a good ſtatuary, engraver, or limner, was called wiſe, as having an excellent knowledge in his particular art. But afterwards, the title of wiſe was appropriated to thoſe that devoted themſelves to the contemplation of the higheſt things, that ſerved for a foundation to ſpeculative ſciences. But ordinarily we count a man a wiſe man, when he conducts his affairs with diſcretion, and governs his paſſions with moderation, and carries himſelf with a due proportion and harmony in all his concerns.

But in particular, wiſdom conſiſts in acting for a right end.—The chiefeſt part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in chuſing fit means, and directing them to that ſcope: to ſhoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wiſeſt man, that hath the nobleſt end and fitteſt means, ſo God is infinitely wiſe; as he is the moſt excellent being, ſo he hath the moſt excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himſelf, nothing can be his end but himſelf:

himſelf: as he is the cauſe of all, ſo he is the end of all; and he puts a true bias into all the means he uſeth to hit the mark he aims at: *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things,* Rom. xi. 36.

Wiſdom conſiſts, in obſerving all circumſtances for action.—He is counted a wiſe man, that lays hold of the fitteſt opportunities to bring his deſigns about, that hath the fulleſt foreſight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a buſineſs he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God hath all the circumſtances of things in one entire image before him; he hath a proſpect of every little creek in any deſign. He ſees what ſecond cauſes will act, and when they will act this or that; yea, he determines them to ſuch and ſuch acts; ſo that it is impoſſible he ſhould be miſtaken, or miſs of the due ſeaſon of bringing about his own purpoſes. As he hath more goodneſs than to deceive any, ſo he hath more underſtanding than to be miſtaken in any thing. Hence the time of the incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, is called the fulneſs of time, the proper ſeaſon for his coming. Every circumſtance about Chriſt was timed accord to the predictions of God; even ſo little a thing as not parting his garment, and the giving him gall and vinegar to drink: and all the bleſſings he ſhowers down upon his people, according to the covenant of grace, are ſaid to come *in his ſeaſon.* Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 26.

Wiſdom conſiſts in willing and acting according to the right reaſon, according to a right judgment of things.—We never count a wilful man a wiſe man, but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counſels are taken and vigorouſly executed. The reſolves and ways of God are not mere will, but well guided by the reaſon and counſel of his own infinite underſtanding, Eph i. 11. *Who works all things according to the counſel of his*

own

own will. The motions of the divine will are not raſh, but follow the propoſals of the divine mind: he chooſes that which is fitteſt to be done, ſo that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a comelineſs and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are ſaid to be *judgment,* Deut. xxxii. 4. not mere will.

Hence it appears, that wiſdom and knowledge are two diſtinct perfections. Knowledge hath its ſeat in the ſpeculative underſtanding, wiſdom in the practical. Wiſdom and knowledge are evidently diſtinguiſhed as two ſeveral gifts of the Spirit in man, 1 Cor. xii. 8. *To one is given by the Spirit the word of wiſdom, to another the word of knowledge by the ſame Spirit.* Knowledge is an underſtanding of general rules, and wiſdom is a drawing concluſions from thoſe rules in order to particular caſes. A man may have the knowledge of the whole ſcripture, and have all learning in the treaſury of his memory, and yet be deſtitute of ſkill to make uſe of them upon particular occaſions, and untie thoſe knotty queſtions which may be propoſed to him, by a ready application of thoſe rules.

Again, knowledge and wiſdom may be diſtinguiſhed in our conception, as two diſtinct perfections in God: the knowledge of God is his underſtanding of all things; his wiſdom is the ſkilful reſolving and acting of all things. And the apoſtle, in his admiration of him, owns them as diſtinct, *Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God,* Rom. xi. 33. Knowledge is the foundation of wiſdom, and antecedent to it; wiſdom the ſuperſtructure upon knowledge: men may have knowledge without wiſdom, but not wiſdom without knowledge; according to our common proverb, "The greateſt clerks are not the wiſeſt men." All practical knowledge is founded in ſpeculation, either *ſecundum rem,* as in a man; or *ſecundum rationem,* as in God. They agree in this, that they are both acts

acts of the underſtanding; but knowledge is the apprehenſion of a thing, and wiſdom is the appointing and ordering of things. Wiſdom is the ſplendor and luſtre of knowledge ſhining forth in operations, and is an act both of underſtanding and will; underſtanding in counſelling and contriving, will in reſolving and executing: counſel and will are linked together, Eph. i. 11.

Secondly, Some propoſitions in general, concerning the wiſdom of God.

1. There is an eſſential and a perſonal wiſdom of God.—The eſſential wiſdom, is the eſſence of God; the perſonal wiſdom, is the Son of God. Chriſt is called Wiſdom by himſelf, Luke vii. 35. The Wiſdom of God by the apoſtle, 1 Cor. i. 24. The wiſdom I ſpeak of belongs to the nature of God, and is conſidered as a neceſſary perfection. The perſonal wiſdom is called ſo, becauſe he opens to us the ſecrets of God. If the Son were that wiſdom whereby the Father is wiſe, the Son would be alſo the eſſence whereby the Father is God. If the Son were the wiſdom of the Father, whereby he is eſſentially wiſe; the Son would be the eſſence of the Father, and the Father would have his eſſence from the Son, ſince the wiſdom of God is the eſſence of God; and ſo the Son would be the Father, if the wiſdom and power of the Father were originally in the Son.

2. The wiſdom of God is the ſame with the eſſence of God.—Wiſdom in God is not a habit added to his eſſence, as it is in man, but it is his eſſence. It is like the ſplendor of the ſun, the ſame with the ſun itſelf; or like the brightneſs of cryſtal, which is not communicated to it by any thing elſe, as by the brightneſs of a mountain is by the beam of the ſun, but it is one with the cryſtal itſelf. It is not a habit ſuperadded to the divine eſſence; that would be repugnant to the ſimplicity of God, and ſpeak him compounded of divers principles;

ciples; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections: if he be eternally wiſe, his wiſdom is his eſſence; for there is nothing eternal, but the eſſence of God. As the ſun melts ſome things, and hardens others; blackens ſome things, and whitens others, and produceth contrary qualities in different ſubjects; yet it is but one and the ſame quality in the ſun, which is the cauſe of thoſe contrary operations: ſo the perfections of God ſeem to be diverſe in our conceptions, yet they are but one and the ſame in God. The wiſdom of God, is God acting prudently; as the power of God, is God acting powerfully, and the juſtice of God, is God acting righteouſly: and therefore it is more truly ſaid, that God is wiſdom, juſtice, truth, and power, than that he is wiſe, juſt, true, &c. as if he were compounded of ſubſtance and qualities. All the operations of God proceed from one ſimple eſſence; as all the operations of the mind of man, though various, proceed from one faculty of underſtanding.

3. Wiſdom is the property of God alone.—*He is only wiſe.* It is an honour peculiar to him. Upon the account that no man deſerved the title of wiſe, but that it was a royalty belonging to God, Pythagoras would not be called Wiſe, a title given to their learned men; but A Lover of Wiſdom. The name philoſopher, aroſe out of reſpect to this tranſcendent perfection of God.

1. God is only wiſe neceſſarily.—As he is neceſſarily God, ſo he is neceſſarily wiſe; for the notion of wiſdom is inſeparable from the notion of a deity. When we ſay God is a ſpirit, is true, righteous, wiſe; we underſtand that he is tranſcendently theſe, by an intrinſic and abſolute neceſſity, by virtue of his own eſſence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by himſelf. God doth not make himſelf wiſe, no more than he makes himſelf God. As he is a neceſſary being in regard of his life, ſo he is neceſſarily wiſe in regard of his underſtanding.

ſtanding. He can no more be unwiſe than he can be untrue; for folly in the mind is much the ſame with falſity in ſpeech. Wiſdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by inſtructions and exerciſe; but the wiſdom of God is his nature. As the ſun cannot be without light, while it remains a ſun; and as eternity cannot be without immortality, ſo neither can God be without wiſdom. As *he only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. not arbitrarily, but neceſſarily; ſo he only hath wiſdom: not becauſe he will be wiſe, but becauſe he cannot but be wiſe. He cannot but contrive counſels, and exert operations, becoming the greatneſs and majeſty of his nature.

2. Therefore only wiſe originally.—Men acquire wiſdom by the loſs of their faireſt years; but his wiſdom is the perfection of the divine nature, not the birth of ſtudy or the growth of experience, but as neceſſary, as eternal, as his eſſence. He goes not out of himſelf to ſearch wiſdom: he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivance of his purpoſes, than he doth their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counſel, he receives no counſel from any, Rom. xi. 34. *Who hath been his counſellor?* and Iſa. xl. 14. *With whom took he counſel, and who inſtructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed to him the path of underſtanding?* He is the only fountain of wiſdom to others; angels and men have what wiſdom they have, by communication from him. All created wiſdom is a ſpark of the divine light, like that of the ſtars borrowed from the ſun. He that borrows wiſdom from another, and doth not originally poſſeſs it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wiſe. As God is the only being, in regard that all other beings are derived from him; ſo he is only wiſe, becauſe all other wiſdom flows from him. He is the ſpring of wiſdom to all; none the original of wiſdom to him.

3. Therefore

3. Therefore only wiſe perfectly.—There is no cloud upon his underſtanding. He hath a diſtinct and certain knowledge of all things that can fall under action: as he hath a perfect knowledge without ignorance, ſo he hath a beautiful wiſdom without mole or wart. Men are wiſe, yet have not an underſtanding ſo vaſt as to graſp all things; nor a perſpicacity ſo clear, as to penetrate into the depths of all beings. Angels have more delightful and lively ſparks of wiſdom, yet ſo imperfect, that in regard of the wiſdom of God they are *charg d with folly*, Job iv. 18. Their wiſdom as well as their holineſs is veiled in the preſence of God. It vaniſheth, as the glowing of a fire doth before the beauty of the ſun; or as the light of a candle in the midſt of a ſunſhine contracts itſelf, and none of its rays are ſeen, but in the body of the flame. The angels are not perfectly wiſe, becauſe they are not perfectly knowing: the goſpel, the great diſcovery of God's wiſdom, was hid from them for ages.

4. Therefore only wiſe univerſally.—Wiſdom in one man is of one ſort, in another of another ſort; one is a wiſe tradeſman, another a wiſe ſtateſman, and another a wiſe philoſopher: one is wiſe in the buſineſs of the world, another is wiſe in divine concerns. One hath not ſo much of plenty of one ſort, but he may have a ſcantineſs in another; one may be wiſe for invention, and fooliſh in execution; an artificer may have ſkill to frame an engine, and not ſkill to uſe it. The ground that is fit for olives, may not be fit for vines; that will bear one ſort of grain and not another. But God hath an univerſal wiſdom, becauſe his nature is wiſe; it is not limited, but hovers over every thing, ſhines in every being. His executions are as wiſe as his contrivances: he is wiſe in his reſolves, and wiſe in his ways; wiſe in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his

will

will wills all things, and his power effects all things; ſo his wiſdom is the univerſal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power; as his righteouſneſs is the meaſure of the matter of his actions, ſo his wiſdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The abſolute power of God is not an unruly power: his wiſdom orders all things, ſo that nothing is done, but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to ſo excellent a being: as he cannot do an unjuſt thing becauſe of his righteouſneſs, ſo he cannot do an unwiſe act, becauſe of his infinite wiſdom. Though God be not neceſſitated to any operation without himſelf, as to the creation of any thing, yet ſuppoſing he will act, his wiſdom neceſſitates him to do that which is congruous, as his righteouſneſs neceſſitates him to do that which is juſt: ſo that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wiſdom is the rule of his actions. We muſt in our conceiving of the order, ſuppoſe wiſdom antecedent to will: none that acknowledges a God, can have ſuch an impious thought, as to affix temerity and raſhneſs to any of his proceedings.

All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treaſury of wiſdom in himſelf. He reſolves nothing about any of his creatures without reaſon; but the reaſon of his purpoſes is in himſelf, and ſprings from himſelf, and not from the creatures: there is not one thing that he wills, but *he wills by counſel, and works by counſel*, Eph. i. 11. Counſel writ down every line, every letter, in his eternal book; and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wiſdom and will: what was illuſtrious in the contrivance, glitters in the execution. His underſtanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will, is the reſult of his underſtanding, and therefore rational: his underſtanding and will join hands; there is no conteſt in God, will againſt mind,

mind, and mind againſt will; they are one in God, one in his reſolves, and one in all his works.

5. Therefore he is only wiſe perpetually.—As the wiſdom of man is got by ripeneſs of age, ſo it is loſt by decay of years; it is got by inſtruction, and loſt by dotage. The perfecteſt minds, when in the wane, have been darkened with folly: Nebuchadnezzar that was wiſe for a man, became as fooliſh as a brute. But the Ancient of Days is an unchangeable poſſeſſor of prudence; his wiſdom is a mirror of brightneſs, without a defacing ſpot. It was poſſeſſed by him *in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old*, Prov. viii. 22. and he can never be diſpoſſeſſed of it in the end of his works. It is inſeparable from him: the being of his godhead may as ſoon ceaſe, as the beauty of his mind; *with him is wiſdom*, Job xii. 13. it is inſeparable from him, therefore as durable as his eſſence. It is a wiſdom infinite, and therefore without increaſe or decreaſe in itſelf. The experience of ſo many ages in the government of the world, hath added nothing to the immenſity of it; as the ſhining of the ſun ſince the creation of the world, hath added nothing to the light of that glorious body. As ignorance never darkens his knowledge, ſo folly never diſgraces his prudence: God infatuates men, but neither men nor devils can infatuate God; he is unerringly wiſe; his counſel doth not vary and flatter; it is not one day one counſel, and another day another, but it ſtands like an immoveable rock, or a mountain of braſs. *The counſel of the Lord ſtands for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*, Pſalm xxxiii. 11.

6. He only is incomprehenſibly wiſe.—His thoughts are *deep*, Pſa. xcii. 5. *His judgments unſearchable, his ways paſt finding out*, Rom. xi. 33. Depths that cannot be fathomed. A ſplendor, more dazzling to our dim minds, than the light of the ſun to our weak eyes. The wiſdom of one man may be comprehended

prehended by another, and over comprehended; and often men are underſtood by others to be wiſer in their actions, than they underſtand themſelves to be. And the wiſdom of one angel may be meaſured by another angel of the ſame perfection. But as the eſſence, ſo the wiſdom of God is incomprehenſible to any creature; God is only comprehended by God: the ſecrets of wiſdom in God are double to the expreſſions of it in his works, Job xi. 6. 7. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God?* There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works; we cannot comprehend the reaſon of his works, much leſs that of his decrees, much leſs that in his nature; becauſe his wiſdom being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the higheſt pitch, than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further teſtimonies of it; ſo neither is his wiſdom, but he could furniſh us with infinite expreſſions and pieces of his ſkill. As in regard of his immenſity, he is not bounded by the limits of place; in regard of his eternity, not meaſured by the minutes of time; in regard of his power, not terminated with this or that number of objects; ſo in regard of his wiſdom, he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working; ſo that in regard of the reaſon of his actions, as well as the glory and majeſty of his nature, he dwells in unapproachable light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. and whatſoever we underſtand of his wiſdom in creation and providence, is infinitely leſs than what is in himſelf, and his own unbounded nature.

Many things in ſcripture are chiefly declared to be the acts of the divine will, yet we muſt not think they were acts of mere will without wiſdom, but they are repreſented ſo to us, becauſe we are not capable of underſtanding the infinite reaſon of its acts: his ſovereignty is more intelligible to us than his wiſdom. We can better know the commands

of a ſuperior, and the laws of a prince, than underſtand the reaſon that gave birth to thoſe laws. We may know the orders of the divine will, as they are publiſhed, but not the ſublime reaſon of his will. Though election is an act of God's ſovereignty, and he hath no cauſe from without to determine him, yet his infinite wiſdom ſtood not ſilent while mere dominion acted. Whatſoever God doth, he doth wiſely, as well as ſovereignly; though that wiſdom which lies in the ſecret places of the divine being, be as incomprehenſible to us, as the effects of his ſovereignty and power in the world are viſible: God can give a reaſon of his proceeding, and that drawn from himſelf, though we underſtand it not.

The cauſes of things viſible lie hid from us; doth any man know how to diſtinguiſh the ſeminal virtue of a ſmall ſeed from the body of it, and in what nook and corner that lies, and what that is that ſpreads itſelf in ſo fair a plant, and ſo many flowers? Can we comprehend the juſtice of God's proceedings in the proſperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly? Yet as we muſt conclude them the fruits of an unerring righteouſneſs, ſo we muſt conclude all his actions the fruits of an unſpotted wiſdom, though the concatenation of all his counſels is not intelligible to us; for he is as eſſentially and neceſſarily wiſe, as he is eſſentially and neceſſarily good and righteous.

God is not only ſo wiſe that nothing more wiſe can be conceived, but he is more wiſe than can be imagined; ſomething greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a fooliſh thing therefore to queſtion that which we cannot comprehend: we ſhould adore it inſtead of diſputing againſt it; and take it for granted, that God would not order any thing, were it not agreeable to the ſovereignty of his wiſdom, as well as that of his will. Though the reaſon of man proceed from

from the wiſdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reaſon of man, and the wiſdom of God, than between the light of the ſun, and the feeble ſhining of the glow-worm; yet we preſume to cenſure the ways of God, as if our purblind reaſon had a reach above him.

7. God is only wiſe infallibly.—The wiſeſt men meet with rubs in the way, that make them fall ſhort of what they aim at; they often deſign, and fail; then begin again, and yet all their counſels end in ſmoke, and none of them arrive at perfection. If the wiſeſt angels lay a plot, they may be diſappointed; for though they are higher and wiſer than man, yet there is one higher and wiſer than they, that can check their projects. God always compaſſeth his end, never fails of any thing he deſigns and aims at; all his undertakings are counſel and will; as nothing can reſiſt the efficacy of his will, ſo nothing can countermine the ſkill of his counſel; *There is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30. He compaſſeth his ends by thoſe actions of men and devils, wherein they think to croſs him; they ſhoot at their own mark, and hit his. Lucifer's plot by divine wiſdom fulfilled God's purpoſes againſt Lucifer's mind. The counſel of redemption by Chriſt, the end of the creation of the world, rode into the world upon the back of the ſerpent's temptation. God never miſtakes the means, nor can there be any diſappointments, to make him vary his counſels, and pitch upon other means than what before he had ordained. *His word that goeth forth of his mouth ſhall not return to him void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which he pleaſes, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto he ſent it*, Iſa. lv. 11. What is ſaid of his word, is true of his counſel, it ſhall proſper in the thing for which it is appointed; it cannot be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; for *as he thinks, ſo ſhall it come to paſs; and as he hath pur-*

poſed, ſo ſhall it ſtand; the Lord hath purpoſed, an who ſhall diſannul it? Iſa. xiv. 24. 27. The wiſdom of the creature is a drop from the wiſdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a ſhadow to the ſun; and therefore is not able to mate the wiſdom of God, which is infinite and boundleſs. No wiſdom is exempted from miſtakes, but the divine: he is wiſe in all his reſolves, and never *calls back his words and purpoſes,* Iſa. xxxi. 2.

Thirdly, To prove that God is wiſe.

This is aſcribed to God in ſcripture, Dan. ii. 20. *Wiſdom and might are his*; wiſdom to contrive, and power to effect. Where ſhould wiſdom dwell, but in the head of a deity; and where ſhould power triumph, but in the arm of omnipotency? All that God doth, he doth artificially, ſkilfully; whence he is called the *Builder of the heavens,* Heb. xi. 10. an artificial and curious builder, a builder by art. And that word, Prov. viii. 30. meant of Chriſt, *Then I was by him as one brought up with him*; ſome render it, *Then was I the curious artificer*; and the ſame word is tranſlated a *cunning workman,* Cant. vii. 5. For this cauſe counſel is aſcribed to God; not properly; for counſel implies ſomething of ignorance, or irreſolution, antecedent to the conſultation, and a poſture of will afterwards, which was not before. Counſel is properly a laborious deliberation, and a reaſoning of things: an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a diſcuſſing and reaſoning of all the doubts which ariſe *pro re natâ,* about the matter in counſel: but God hath no need to deliberate in himſelf, what are the beſt means to accompliſh his ends: he is never ignorant, or undetermined, what courſe he ſhould take, as men are before they conſult. But it is an expreſſion in condeſcenſion to our capacity, to ſignify that God doth nothing but with reaſon and underſtanding, with the higheſt prudence, and for the moſt glorious ends, as men do after conſultation,

ſultation, and the weighing of every foreſeen circumſtance.

Though he acts all things ſovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wiſely by his underſtanding; and there is not a decree of his will, but he can render a ſatisfactory reaſon for in the face of men and angels. As he is the cauſe of all things, ſo he hath the higheſt wiſdom for the ordering of all things. If wiſdom among men be the knowledge of divine and human things, God muſt be infinitely wiſe, ſince knowledge is moſt radiant in him; he knows what angels and men do, and infinitely more; what is known by them obſcurely, is known by him clearly: what is known by man after it is done, was known by God before it was wrought. By his wiſdom as much by any thing, he infinitely differs from all his creatures, as by wiſdom man differs from a brute. We cannot frame a notion of God, without conceiving him infinitely wiſe. We ſhould render him very inconſiderable, to imagine him furniſhed with an infinite knowledge, and not have an infinite wiſdom to make uſe of that knowledge; or to fancy him with a mighty power, deſtitute of prudence. Knowledge without prudence is an eye without motion; and power without diſcretion is an arm without a head; a hand to act, without underſtanding to contrive and model; a ſtrength to act, without reaſon to know how to act: it would be a miſerable notion of a God, to fancy him with a brutiſh and unguided power. The heathens therefore had, and could not but have this natural notion of God. Plato calls him *Mens*, and Cleanthes uſed to call God *Reaſon*, and Socrates thought the title of *Wiſe* too magnificent to be attributed to any thing elſe but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wiſe.

1. God could not be infinitely perfect without wiſdom.—A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man with-

out reaſon; how can God without it, be an infinitely perfect God? Wiſdom is the moſt eminent of all virtues; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a ſoul without underſtanding. A chriſtian's graces want their luſtre, when they are deſtitute of the guidance of wiſdom: mercy is a feebleneſs, and juſtice a cruelty, patience a timorouſneſs, and courage a madneſs, without the conduct of wiſdom; ſo the patience of God would be cowardice, his power an oppreſſion, his juſtice a tyranny, without wiſdom as the ſpring, and holineſs as the rule. No attribute of God could ſhine with a due luſtre and brightneſs without it. Power is a great perfection, but wiſdom a greater. Wiſdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants; but power is a tyrannical thing without wiſdom and righteouſneſs. The pilot is more valuable on account of his ſkill, than the gally ſlave becauſe of his ſtrength, and the conduct of a general more eſtimable than the might of a private ſoldier. Generals are choſen more by their ſkill to guide, than their ſtrength to act; what a clod is a man without prudence; what a nothing would God be without it? This is the ſalt that gives reliſh to all other perfections in a creature: this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the divine nature, and holineſs is the ſplendor of that jewel.

Now God being the firſt being, poſſeſſes whatſoever is moſt noble in any being. If therefore wiſdom, which is the moſt noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the higheſt excellency. God being the living God, as he is frequently termed in ſcripture, he hath therefore the moſt perfect manner of living, and that muſt be a pure and intellectual life: being eſſentially living, he is eſſentially in the higheſt degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures, ſo he hath an infinite intellectual

intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wiſdom; whence ſome have called God not *ſapientem*, but *ſuper-ſapientem*, not only wiſe, but above all wiſdom.

2. Without infinite wiſdom he could not govern the world.—Without wiſdom in forming the matter, which was made by divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wiſdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confuſion; without wiſdom the world could not have been created in the poſture it is. Creation ſuppoſeth a determination of the will putting power upon acting; the determination of the will ſuppoſeth the counſel of the underſtanding, determining the will: no work, but ſuppoſeth underſtanding as well as will in a rational agent. As without ſkill things could not be created, ſo without it things cannot be governed. Reaſon is a neceſſary perfection to him that preſides over all things: without knowledge there could not be in God a foundation for government, and without wiſdom there could not be an exerciſe of government, and without the moſt excellent wiſdom, he could not be the moſt excellent governor. He could not be a univerſal governor, without a univerſal wiſdom; nor the ſole governor without an inimitable wiſdom; nor an independant governor without an original and independant wiſdom; nor a perpetual governor without an incorruptible wiſdom. He would not be the Lord of the world in all points, without ſkill to order the affairs of it. Power and wiſdom are foundations of all authority and government: wiſdom to know how to rule, and command; power to make thoſe commands obeyed: no regular order could iſſue out without the firſt, nor could any order be enforced without the ſecond. A feeble wiſdom and a brutiſh power, ſeldom or never produce any good effect. Magiſtracy without wiſdom, would be a frantic power, a raſh conduct; like a ſtrong arm when the eye is out,

it ſtrikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wiſdom without power, would be like a great body without feet, like the knowledge of a pilot that hath loſt his arm, who though he knows the rule of navigation, and what courſe to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm: but when thoſe two, wiſdom and power are linked together, there ariſeth from both a fitneſs for government: there is wiſdom to propoſe an end, and both wiſdom and power to employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore when God demonſtrates to Job his right of government, and the unreaſonableneſs of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urgeth upon him the conſideration of thoſe two excellencies of his nature, power and wiſdom, which are expreſſed in his works. A prince without wiſdom, is but a title without a capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government: nor could God without wiſdom exerciſe a juſt dominion in the world. He hath therefore the higheſt wiſdom, ſince he is the univerſal governor. That wiſdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wiſdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a nation or kingdom, much leſs a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wiſdom for government muſt needs ſurmount the wiſdom of all. And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed but by one endowed with infinite diſcretion. Providential government can be no more without infinite wiſdom, than infinite wiſdom can be without providence.

3. The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, demonſtrates the wiſdom of God that guides them.—All things in the world work for ſome end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends are viſible to us. As there was ſome prime cauſe, which by his power inſpired

inſpired them with their ſeveral inſtincts, ſo there muſt be ſome ſupreme wiſdom, which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifeſts his power that endowed them, ſo the acting according to the rules of their nature, which they themſelves underſtand not, manifeſts his wiſdom in directing them. Every thing that acts for an end, muſt know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow doth not know who ſhoots it, or to what end it is ſhot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the ſpring nor the wheels that move, know the end of their motion; no man will judge a wiſdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that diſpoſed the wheels and ſprings, by a joint combination to produce ſuch a motion for ſuch an end. Doth either the ſun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travels with the plant, know what plant it produceth in ſuch a ſoil, what temper it ſhould be of, what fruit it ſhould bear, and of what colour? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what uſe they are ordained? when it ſtrikes up its head from the earth, doth it know what proportion of them there will be? yet it produceth all theſe things in a ſtate of ignorance. The ſun warms the earth, concocts the humours, excites the virtue of it, and cheriſhes the ſeeds, which are caſt into her lap, yet all unknown to the ſun or the earth. Since therefore that nature, that is the immediate cauſe of thoſe things, doth not underſtand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them muſt be conceived to have an infinite wiſdom. When things act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they underſtand not, and yet work harmoniouſly together for one end, that all of them, we are ſure, are ignorant of, it mounts up our minds to acknowledge the wiſdom of that ſupreme cauſe,

that

that hath ranged all theſe inferior cauſes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motions, according to the ideas in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act, and directs every motion according to their ſeveral natures, and therefore is poſſeſſed with infinite wiſdom in his own nature.

4. God is the fountain of all wiſdom in the creatures and therefore is infinitely wiſe himſelf.—As he hath a fulneſs of being in himſelf, becauſe the ſtreams of being are derived to other things from him; ſo he hath a fulneſs of wiſdom, becauſe he is the ſpring of wiſdom to angels and men. That being muſt be infinitely wiſe, from whence all other wiſdom derives its original: for nothing can be in the effect, which is not eminently in the cauſe; the cauſe is always more perfect than the effect. If therefore the creatures are wiſe, the creator muſt be much more wiſe. If the creator were deſtitute of wiſdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the creator. If you conſider the wiſdom of the ſpider in her web, which is both her houſe and net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the proviſion of the piſmire in her repoſitories for corn; the wiſdom of the creator is illuſtrated by them; whatſoever excellency you ſee in any creature, is an image of ſome excellency in God. The ſkill of the artificer is viſible in the fruits of his art; a workman tranſcribes his ſpirit in the work of his hands. But the wiſdom of rational creatures, as men, doth more illuſtrate it: all arts among men are the rays of divine wiſdom ſhining upon them, and by a common gift of the Spirit enlightening their minds to curious inventions, as Prov. viii. 12. *I, wiſdom, find out the knowledge of witty inventions*; that is, I give a faculty to men to find them out; without my wiſdom, all things would be buried in darkneſs and ignorance: whatſoever wiſdom there is in the world, it is but a

ſhadow

ſhadow of the wiſdom of God, a ſmall rivulet derived, from him, a ſpark leaping out from uncreated wiſdom. Iſa. liv. 16. *He created the ſmith that bloweth the coals in the fire and maketh inſtruments*: the ſkill to uſe thoſe weapons in warlike enterpriſes is from him, *I have created the waſter to deſtroy*; it is not meant of creating their perſons, but communicating to them their art; he ſpeaks it there to expel fear from the church of all warlike preparations againſt them: he had given men the ſkill to form and uſe weapons, and could as well ſtrip them of it, and defeat their purpoſes: the art of huſbandry is a fruit of divine teaching, Iſa. xxviii. 24. 25. If thoſe lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and eaſily learned by all, are diſcoveries of divine wiſdom, much more the nobler ſciences, intellectual and political wiſdom, Dan. ii. 21. *He gives wiſdom to the wiſe, and knowledge to them that know underſtanding*; ſpeaking of the more abſtruſe parts of knowledge; *The inſpiration of the Almighty gives underſtanding*, Job xxxii. 8. Hence the wiſdom which Solomon expreſſed in the *harlot's caſe*, 1 Kings iii. 28, was in the judgment of all Iſrael, the *wiſdom of God*; that is, a fruit of divine wiſdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man's ſoul is endowed more or leſs with thoſe noble qualities: the ſoul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the ſtreams be ſo excellent, the fountain muſt be fuller and clearer. The firſt ſpirit muſt infinitely more poſſeſs, what other ſpirits derive from him by creation; were the wiſdom of all the angels in heaven and men on earth collected in one ſpirit, it muſt be infinitely leſs than what is in the ſpring; for no creature can be equal to the creator. As the higheſt creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, ſo it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wiſe.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Wherein the wiſdom of God appears, 1. In creation. 2. In government. 3. In redemption.

1. In creation.—As in a muſical inſtrument, there is firſt the ſkill of the workman in the frame; then the ſkill of the muſician in ſtringing it, proper for ſuch muſical notes as he will expreſs upon it; and after that the tempering of the ſtrings by various ſtops to a delightful harmony: ſo is the wiſdom of God ſeen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the ſeveral creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wiſdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 21. *After that in the wiſdom of God the world by wiſdom knew not God*, i. e. by the creation the world knew not God; the framing cauſe is there put for the effect and the work framed: becauſe the divine wiſdom ſtepped forth in the creatures to a public appearance, as if it had preſented itſelf in a viſible ſhape to man, giving inſtructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we tranſlate Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; the Targum expreſſes it, *In wiſdom God created the heaven and the earth.* Both bear a ſtamp of this perfection on them: and when the apoſtle tells the Romans, Rom. i. 20. *The inviſible things of God were clearly underſtood by the things that are made*; the word he uſes, ſignifies a work of labour, of ſkill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every ſpecies a ſtanza, and every individual creature a verſe in it. The creation preſents us with a proſpect of the wiſdom of God, as a poem doth the reader with the wit and fancy of the compoſer: *By wiſdom he created the earth*, Prov. iii. 19. *and ſtretched out the heavens by diſcretion*, Jer. x. 12. There is not any thing ſo mean, ſo ſmall, but glitters with a beam of divine ſkill; and the conſideration of them would juſtly make every man ſubſcribe to that of the pſalmiſt, *O Lord, how manifold,*

fold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all, Pſa. civ. 24. All, the leaſt as well as the greateſt, and the meaneſt as well as the nobleſt; even thoſe creatures which ſeem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c. becauſe they fall ſhort of thoſe perfections which are the dowry of other animals: in theſe there is a footſtep of divine wiſdom, ſince they were not produced by him at random, but determined to ſome particular end, and deſigned to ſome uſefulneſs, as parts of the world in their ſeveral natures and ſtations. God could never have had ſatisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did, Gen. i. 31. had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind: it is ſaid, he was refreſhed, viz. with that review, Exod. xxxi. 17. which could not have been, if his piercing eye had found any defect in any thing which had ſprung out of his hand, or an unſuitableneſs to that end for which he created them. He ſeems to do as a man that hath made a curious and polite work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the miſtake: but no defect was found by the infinitely wiſe God upon this ſecond examination.

This wiſdom of the creation appears, 1. In the variety. 2. In the beauty. 3. The fitneſs of every creature for its uſe. 4. The ſubordination of one creature to another, and the joint concurrence of all to one common end.

1. In the variety.—Pſa. civ. 24. *O Lord how manifold are thy works!* How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, ſhapes, figurations, colours, various ſmells, virtues and qualities! and this rarity is produced from one and the ſame matter, as beaſts and plants from the earth, Gen. i. 11, 24, *Let the earth bring forth living creatures; and the earth brought forth graſs, and the herb yielding ſeed after his*

his kind: Such diverſity of fowl and fiſh from the water, Gen. i. 20, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly*; ſuch a beautiful and active variety from ſo dull a matter as the earth; ſo ſolid a variety from ſo fluid a matter as the water; ſo noble a piece as the body of man, with ſuch a variety of members, fit to entertain a more excellent ſoul as a gueſt, from ſo mean a matter as *the duſt of the ground*, Gen. ii. 7. This extraction of ſuch variety of forms out of one ſingle and dull matter, is the chemiſtry of divine wiſdom: it is a greater ſkill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious veſſels of clay and earth, than of a nobler matter, as gold and ſilver.

Again, all thoſe varieties propagate their kind in every particular and quality of their nature, and uniformly bring forth exact copies according to the firſt pattern God made of the *kind*, Gen. i. 11, 12, 24. Conſider alſo how the ſame piece of ground is garniſhed with plants and flowers of ſeveral virtues, fruits, colours, ſcents, without our being able to perceive any variety in the earth that breeds them, and not ſo great a difference in the roots that bear them. Add to this, the diverſities of birds of different colours, ſhapes, notes, conſiſting of various parts, wings like oars to cut the air, and tails as the rudder of a ſhip to guide their motion.

How various alſo are the endowments of the creatures? ſome have vegetation, and the power of growth; others have the addition of ſenſe, and others the excellency of reaſon; ſomething wherein all agree, and ſomething wherein all differ; variety in unity, and unity in variety: the wiſdom of the workman had not been ſo conſpicuous, had there been only one degree of goodneſs: the greateſt ſkill is ſeen in the greateſt variety.

The comelineſs of the body is viſible in the variety of members, and their uſefulneſs to one another; what

what an inform thing had man been, had he been all ear, or all eye? If God had made all the ſtars to be ſuns, it would have been a demonſtration of his power, but perhaps leſs of his wiſdom; no creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under ſo much heat: there was no leſs wiſdom went to the frame of the leaſt, than to the greateſt creature. It ſpeaks more art in a limner to paint a landſcape exactly, than to draw the ſun, though the ſun be a more glorious body.

I might inſtance alſo in the different characters and features imprinted upon the countenances of men and women, the differences of voices and ſtatures, whereby they are diſtinguiſhed from one another: theſe are the foundations of order and of human ſociety and adminiſtration of juſtice; what confuſion would have been, if a grown-up ſon could not be known from his father, the magiſtrate from the ſubject, the creditor from the debtor, the innocent from the criminal? the laws God hath given to mankind, could not have been put in execution: this variety ſpeaks the wiſdom of God.

2. The wiſdom of the creation appears in the beauty and order and ſituation of the ſeveral creatures.—Eccl. iii. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.* As their being was a fruit of the divine power, ſo their order is a fruit of divine wiſdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole; ſo that if the particular forms of every thing, the union of all for the compoſition of the world, and the laws which are eſtabliſhed in the order of nature for its conſervation, be conſidered, it would raviſh us with an admiration of God: all the creatures are ſo many pictures or ſtatues, exactly framed by line; Pſa. xix. 4. *Their line is gone through all the earth*; their line, a meaſuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions ſeveral pieces to be exactly

exactly linked and coupled together. Their line, that is, their harmonious proportion, and the inſtruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, ſome of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with muſical inſtruments in their hands, ſignifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion.

The heavens ſpeak this wiſdom in their order.

The revolutions of the ſun and moon determine the ſeaſons of the year, and make day and night in an orderly ſucceſſion. The ſtars beautify the heavens, and influence the earth, and keep their *courſes*, Judges v. 20. They keep their ſtations without interfering with one another; and though they have rolled about for ſo many ages, they obſerve their diſtinct laws, and in the variety of their motions have not diſturbed one another's functions.

The ſun is ſet as the heart in the midſt of this great body, to afford warmth to all: had it been ſet lower, it had long ſince turned the earth into flame and aſhes: had it been placed higher, the earth would have wanted the nouriſhment and refreſhment neceſſary for it. Too much nearneſs had ruined the earth by parching heat, and too great a diſtance had deſtroyed the earth by ſtarving it with cold.

The ſun hath alſo its appointed motion; had it been fixed without motion, half of the earth had been unprofitable; there had been a perpetual darkneſs in a moiety of it; nothing had been produced for nouriſhment, and ſo it had been rendered uninhabitable: but now by this motion, it viſits all the climates of the world, *runs its circuit*, ſo that *nothing is hid from the heat thereof*, Pſa. xix. 6. It imparts its virtue to every corner of the world in its daily and yearly viſits. Had it been fixed, the fruits of the earth under it had been parched and deſtroyed before their maturity; but all thoſe inconveniences are provided againſt by the perpetual motion of the ſun.

This

This motion is orderly; it makes its daily courſe from eaſt to weſt, its yearly motion from north to ſouth: it goes to the north, till it comes to the point God hath ſet it, and then turns back to the ſouth, and gains ſome point every day: it never riſeth nor ſets in the ſame place one day, where it did the day before. The world is never without its light; ſome ſee it riſing the ſame moment we ſee its ſetting.

The earth alſo ſpeaks the divine wiſdom; it is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling of fretwork. It is placed lowermoſt, as being the heavieſt body, and fit to receive the weightieſt matter, and provided as an habitation proper for thoſe creatures, which derive the matter of their bodies from it, and partake of its earthy nature; and garniſhed with other creatures for the profit and pleaſure of man.

The ſea alſo ſpeaks the ſame divine wiſdom. *He ſtrengthened the fountains of the deep, and gave the ſea a decree, that it ſhould not paſs his command*, Prov. viii. 28, 29. He hath given it certain bounds, that it ſhould not overflow the earth, Job xxviii. 11. It contains itſelf in the ſituation wherein God hath placed it, and doth not tranſgreſs its bounds. What if ſome part of a country, a little ſpot, hath been overflowed by it, and groaned under its waves? yet for the main, it retains the ſame channels wherein it was at firſt lodged.

All creatures are cloathed with an outward beauty, and endowed with an inward harmony; there is an agreement in all parts of this great body; every one is beautiful and orderly; but the beauty of the world reſults from all of them diſpoſed and linked together.

3. This wiſdom is ſeen in the fitneſs of every thing for its end, and the uſefulneſs of it. Divine wiſdom is more illuſtrious in the fitneſs and uſefulneſs of his great variety, than in the compoſure

of their diſtinct parts: as the artificer's ſkill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and ſetting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the materials which compoſe the clock.

After the moſt diligent inſpection, there can be found nothing in the creation unprofitable; nothing but is capable of ſome ſervice, either for the ſupport of our bodies, recreation of our ſenſes, or moral inſtruction of our minds: not the leaſt creature, but is formed and ſhaped and furniſhed with members and parts, in a due proportion for its end and ſervice in the world; nothing is ſuperfluous, nothing defective.

The earth is fitted in its parts; the vallies are appointed for granaries, the mountains to ſhadow them from the ſcorching heat of the ſun; the rivers, like veins, carry refreſhment to every member of this body; plants and trees thrive on the face of the earth, and metals are ingendered in the bowels of it, for materials for building and other uſes for the ſervice of man. *There he cauſes the graſs to grow for the cattle, and herb for the ſervice of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth*, Pſa. civ. 14.

The ſea is fitted for uſe; it is a fiſh-pond for the nouriſhment of man; a boundary for the dividing of lands and ſeveral dominions; it joins together nations far diſtant: a great veſſel for commerce, Pſa. civ. 26. *There go the ſhips.* It affords vapours to the clouds, wherewith to water the earth, which the ſun draws up, ſeparating the finer from the ſalter parts, that the earth may be fruitful, without being burthened with barrenneſs by the ſalt. The ſea hath alſo its ſalt, its ebbs and floods; the one as brine, the other as motion, to preſerve it from putrefaction, that it may not be contagious to the reſt of the world.

Showers are appointed to refreſh the bodies of living creatures, to open the womb of the earth, and

and *water the ground to make it fruitful*, Pſa. civ. 3. The clouds therefore are called the chariots of God; he rides in them in the manifeſtation of his goodneſs and wiſdom.

Winds are fitted to purify the air, to preſerve it from putrifaction; to carry the clouds to ſeveral parts, to refreſh the parched earth, and aſſiſt her fruits: and alſo to ſerve for the commerce of one nation with another by navigation. God in his wiſdom and goodneſs *walks upon the wings of the wind*, Pſa. civ. 3.

Rivers are appointed to bathe the ground, and render it freſh and lively; they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, ſerve for commerce; they are the watering pots of the earth, and the veſſels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut thoſe channels for the wild aſſes, the beaſts of the deſart, which are his creatures as well as the reſt, Pſa. civ. 10, 12, 13.

Trees are appointed for the habitations of birds, ſhadows for the earth, nouriſhment for the creatures, materials for building, and fuel for the relief of man againſt cold.

The ſeaſons of the year have their uſe; the winter makes the juice retire into the earth; fortifies plants, and fixes their roots: it moiſtens the earth that was dried before by the heat of ſummer, and cleanſeth and prepares it for a new fruitfulneſs. The ſpring calls out the ſap in new leaves and fruit; the ſummer conſumes the ſuperfluous moiſture, and produceth nouriſhment for the inhabitants of the world.

The day and night have alſo their uſefulneſs: the day gives life to labour, and is a guide to motion and action. Pſa. civ. 23. *The ſun ariſeth, man goeth forth to his labour until the evening.* It warms the air, and quickens nature; without day the world would be a chaos, an unſeen beauty. The night indeed caſts a vail upon the bravery of

the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us ſee the beauty of the world above, and diſcovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapeſtry of heaven, and the motion of the ſtars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labour, and refreſheth the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the ſpirits which are ſcattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was waſted in the day. It takes from us the ſight of flowers and plants, but it waſheth their face with dews for a new appearance next morning. The length of the day and night, is not without a mark of wiſdom; were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moiſten; and for want of action, the members would be ſtupified. The perpetual ſucceſſion of day and night, is an evidence of the divine wiſdom, in tempering the travel and reſt of creatures. Hence the pſalmiſt tells us, Pſa. lxxiv. 16. 17. *The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou haſt prepared the light of the ſun, and made ſummer and winter*; i. e. they are of God's framing, not without a wiſe counſel and end.

Hence let us aſcend to the bodies of living creatures, and we ſhall find every member fitted for uſe. What a curioſity is there in every member? every one fitted to a particular uſe in their ſituation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole: the eye to direct, the ear to receive directions from others, the hands to act, the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it reſides: and in the body, ſome parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to diſtribute and convey it to ſeveral parts for the maintenance of the whole: the heart to mint vital ſpirits for preſerving life, and the brain to coin animal ſpirits for

for life and motion; the lungs to ſerve for the cooling the heart, which elſe would be parched as the ground in ſummer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and alſo without the will by a natural inſtinct, is an admirable evidence of divine ſkill in the ſtructure of the body; ſo that well might the pſalmiſt cry out, Pſa. cxxxix. 14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

But how much more of this divine perfection is ſeen in the ſoul? A nature furniſhed with a faculty of underſtanding to judge of things, to gather in things that are diſtant, and to reaſon and draw concluſions from one thing to another, with a memory to treaſure up things that are paſt, with a will to apply itſelf ſo readily to what the mind judges fit and comely, and fly ſo ſpeedily from what it judges ill and hurtful. The whole world is a ſtage, every creature in it hath a part to act, and a nature ſuited to that part and end it is deſigned for; and all concur in a joint language to publiſh the glory of divine wiſdom, they have a voice to proclaim the *glory of God,* Pſa. xix. 1, 3. And it is not the leaſt part of God's ſkill, in framing the creatures ſo, that upon man's obedience, they are the channels of his goodneſs; and upon man's diſobedience, they can in their natures be the miniſters of his juſtice for the puniſhing of offending creatures.

4. This wiſdom is apparent in the linking all theſe uſeful parts together, ſo that one is ſubordinate to the other for a common end.—All parts are exactly ſuited to one another, and every part to the whole, though they are of different natures, as lines diſtant in themſelves, yet they meet in one common center, the good and the preſervation of the univerſe; they are all jointed together, as the word tranſlated *framed* ſignifies; knit by fit bands and ligaments to contribute mutual beauty, ſtrength and aſſiſtance to one another; like ſo many links of a chain coupled

together, that though there be a diſtance in place, there is an unity in regard of connection and end, there is a conſent in the whole. Hoſ. ii. 21, 22. *The heavens hear the earth, and the earth hears the corn, and the wine and the oil.* The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits ſhe bears: the air diſtributes light, wind and rain to the earth; the earth and the ſea render to the air exhalations and vapors, and altogether charitably give to the plants and animals that which is neceſſary for their nouriſhment and refreſhment. The influences of the heavens animate the earth, and the earth affords matter in part for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nouriſhment which is conveyed to them by the fruits of the earth; the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat; matter for rain and dew is raiſed by the heat of the ſun; and the ſun by its motion diſtributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth. So colours are made for the pleaſure of the eye, ſounds for the delight of the ear: light is formed, whereby the eye may ſee the one, and air to convey the ſpecies of colours to the eye, and ſound to the ear; all things are like the wheels of a watch compacted: and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined in a marriage knot for the public ſecurity, and ſubſerviency to the preſervation and order of the univerſe: as the variety of ſtrings upon an inſtrument, ſending forth various and diſtinct ſounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this univerſal conſpiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wiſdom of the creator apparent; in tuning ſo many contraries as the elements are, and preſerving them in their order, which if once broken, the whole frame of nature would crack, and fall in pieces; all are ſo interwoven and inlaid together, by the divine workmanſhip,

manſhip, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric: as every part in the body of man hath a diſtinct comelineſs, yet there is beſides, the beauty of the whole, that reſults from the union of divers parts exactly faſhioned to one another, and linked together.

Secondly, The wiſdom of God appears in his government of his creatures.—The regular motion of creatures ſpeaks for this perfection, as well as the exact compoſition of them. If the exquiſiteneſs of the frame conducts us to the ſkill of the contriver; the exactneſs of their order, according to his will and law, ſpeaks no leſs the wiſdom of the governor. It cannot be thought that a raſh and irrational power preſides over a world ſo well diſpoſed: the diſpoſition of things hath no leſs characters of ſkill, than the creation of them. No man can hear an excellent leſſon upon a lute, but muſt preſently reflect upon the art of the perſon that touches it. The prudence of man appears in wrapping up the concerns of a kingdom in his mind, for the well ordering of it; and ſhall not the wiſdom of God ſhine forth, as he is the director of the world?*

Thirdly, The wiſdom of God wonderfully appears in redemption.—His wiſdom in creation raviſheth the eye and underſtanding; his wiſdom in government, doth no leſs affect a curious obſerver of the links and concatenation of the means; but his wiſdom in redemption mounts the mind to a greater aſtoniſhment. The works of creation are the footſteps of his wiſdom; the work of redemption is the face of his wiſdom: a man is better known by the features of his face, than by the prints of his feet. We with *open face*, or *a revealed face, beholding the glory of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Face there, refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wiſdom is now open, and no longer covered and veiled by

* See more on the ſubject of God's Government in the following diſcourſe on his Power.

the ſhadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious, as ſcattered in the air before the appearance of the ſun, but more glorioufly in the face of the ſun, when it begins its race in our horizon. All the wiſdom of God in creation and government in his variety of laws, was like the light the three firſt days of the creation diſperſed about the world, but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the *ſun*, Gen. i. 4, 16. So the light of divine wiſdom and glory, was ſcattered about the world, and ſo more obſcure till the fourth divine day of the world about the four thouſandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of Righteouſneſs, and ſo ſhone out more glorioufly to men and angels. All things are weaker, the thinner they are extended, but ſtronger, the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Chriſt, in the diſpenſation by him, as well as in his perſon, were *hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. Some doles of wiſdom were given out in creation, but the treaſures of it opened in redemption; the higheſt degrees of it that ever did exert in the world. Chriſt is therefore called the *wiſdom of God*, as well as the *power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. and the goſpel is called the wiſdom of God. Chriſt is the wiſdom of God principally, and the goſpel inſtrumentally, as it is the power of God inſtrumentally to ſubdue the heart to himſelf. This is wrapped up in the appointing Chriſt as Redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the goſpel.

It is a hidden wiſdom—In this regard God is ſaid in the text, to be *only wiſe*; and it is ſaid to be a *hidden wiſdom*, 1 Tim. i. 17. and *wiſdom in a myſtery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. incomprehenſible to the ordinary capacity of an angel, more than the abſtruſe qualities of the creatures are to the underſtanding of man. No wiſdom of men or angels is able to ſearch all the veins of this mine, to tell all the threads of this

this web, or to underſtand the luſtre of it: they are as far from an ability fully to comprehend it, as they were at firſt to contrive it. That wiſdom which invented it, can only comprehend it. In the uncreated underſtanding only there is a clearneſs of light without any ſhadow of darkneſs. We come as ſhort of full apprehenſion of it, as a child doth of the counſel of the wiſeſt prince. It is ſo hidden from us, that without revelation, we could not have the leaſt imagination of it; and though it be revealed to us, yet without the help of an infiniteneſs of underſtanding, we cannot fully fathom it: it is ſuch a tractate of divine wiſdom, that the angels never before had ſeen the edition of it, till it was publiſhed to the world, Eph. iii. 10. *To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God.* Now made known to them, not before; and now made known to them in the heavenly places. They had not the knowledge of all heavenly myſteries, though they had the poſſeſſion of heavenly glory: they knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of thoſe prophecies, till the things that were prophecied of came upon the ſtage.

Manifold wiſdom: ſo it is called. As manifold as myſterious. Variety in the myſtery, and myſtery in every part of the variety. It was not one ſingle act, but a variety of counſels met in it; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the ſalvation of man, the defeat of the apoſtate angels, the diſcovery of the bleſſed trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and diſtinct acts and expreſſions of goodneſs: the means are the conjunction of two natures infinitely diſtant from one another; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality: death is made the way to life, and ſhame the path to glory. The weakneſs of the croſs is the reparation of man; and

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the creature is made wiſe by the fooliſhneſs of preaching; fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptineſs of God; the heir of hell made a ſon of God by God taking upon him the form of a ſervant; the ſon of man advanced to the higheſt degree of honour, by the Son of God becoming of no reputation.

It is called Eph. i. 8. *abundance of wiſdom and prudence.* Wiſdom in the eternal counſel, contriving a way; prudence in the temporary revelation, ordering all affairs and occurrences in the world for the attaining the end of his counſel. Wiſdom refers to the myſtery; prudence to the manifeſtation of it in fit ways and convenient ſeaſons. Wiſdom, to the contrivance and order; prudence to the execution and accompliſhment. In all things God acted as *became him,* as a wiſe and juſt governor of the world, Heb. ii. 10. Whether the wiſdom of God might not have found out ſome other way, or whether he were, in regard of the neceſſity and naturalneſs of his juſtice, limited to this, is not the queſtion: but that it is the beſt and wiſeſt way for the manifeſtation of his glory, is out of queſtion.

This wiſdom will appear in the different intereſts reconciled by it. In the ſubject, the ſecond perſon in the trinity, wherein they were reconciled: in the two natures, wherein he accompliſhed it; whereby God is made known to man in his glory, ſin eternally condemned, and the repenting and believing ſinner eternally reſcued. The honor and righteouſneſs of the law vindicated both in the precept and penalty. The devil's empire overthrown by the ſame nature he had overturned, and the ſubtility of hell defeated by that nature he had ſpoiled: the creature engaged in every act to the higheſt obedience and humility, that as God appears as a God upon his throne, the creature might appear in the loweſt poſture of a creature, in the depths of reſignation and dependance; the publication of this made

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in the goſpel, by ways congruous to the wiſdom which appeared in the execution of his counſel, and the conditions of enjoying the fruit of it, moſt wiſe and reaſonable.

The greateſt different intereſts are reconciled, juſtice in puniſhing, and mercy in pardoning.—For man had broken the law, and plunged himſelf into a gulf of miſery: the ſword of vengeance was unſheathed by juſtice, for the puniſhment of the criminal: the bowels of compaſſion were ſtirred by mercy, for the reſcue of the miſerable. Juſtice ſeverely beholds the ſin, and mercy compaſſionately reflects upon the miſery. Two different claims are entered by thoſe concerned attributes: juſtice votes for deſtruction, and mercy votes for ſalvation: juſtice would draw the ſword, and drench it in the blood of the offender; mercy would ſtop the ſword, and turn it from the breaſt of the ſinner. Juſtice would edge it, and mercy would blunt it. The arguments are ſtrong on both ſides.

Juſtice pleads.—I arraign, before the tribunal, a rebel, who was the glorious work of thy hands, the center of the rich goodneſs, and a counterpart of thy own image; he is indeed miſerable, whereby to excite thy compaſſion; but he is not miſerable, without being criminal, thou didſt create him in a ſtate, and with ability to do otherwiſe: the riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackneſs of his crime. He is a rebel, not by neceſſity, but will. What conſtraint was there upon him to liſten to the counſels of the enemy of God? What force could there be upon him, ſince it is without the compaſs of any creature to work upon, or conſtrain the will? Nothing of ignorance can excuſe him; the law was not ambiguouſly expreſſed, but in plain words, both as to precept and penalty; it was writ in his nature in legible characters: had he received any diſguſt from thee after his creation, it would not excuſe his apoſtacy, ſince, as a ſovereign, thou wert

wert not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadſt provided all things richly for him; he was crowned with glory and honour: thy infinite power had beſtowed upon him an habitation richly furniſhed, and varieties of ſervants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without, and whatever he viewed within himſelf, were ſeveral marks of thy divine bounty, to engage him to obedience: had there been ſome reaſon of any diſguſt, it could not have balanced that kindneſs which had ſo much reaſon to oblige him: however, he had received no courteſy from the fallen angel, to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough, that one of thy creatures would have ſtripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this alſo muſt deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his creator? Can he charge the difficulty of the command? No; it was rather below, than above his ſtrength. He might rather complain that it was no higher, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger ſcope, and a more ſpacious field to move in, than a precept ſo light, ſo eaſy as to abſtain from one fruit in the garden. What excuſe can he have, that would prefer the liquoriſhneſs of his ſenſe before the dictates of his reaſon, and the obligations of his creation? The law thou didſt ſet him, was righteous and reaſonable, and ſhall righteouſneſs and reaſon be rejected by the ſupreme and infallible reaſon, becauſe the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it? What! muſt God abbrogate his holy law, becauſe the creature hath ſlighted it? what reflection will this be upon the wiſdom that enacted it; and upon the equity of the command and ſanction of it? Either man muſt ſuffer, or the holy law be expunged and for ever out of date. And is it not better, man ſhould eternally ſmart under his crime, than any diſhonourable reflections of unrighteouſneſs be caſt upon the law, and of folly, and want of foreſight

ſight upon the lawgiver? Not to puniſh, would be to approve the devil's lie, and juſtify the creatures revolt. It would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a ſentencing thy own wiſdom as imprudent. Better man ſhould for ever bear the puniſhment of his offence, than God bear the diſhonour of his attributes: better man ſhould be miſerable, than God ſhould be unrighteous, unwiſe, falſe, and tamely bear the denial of his ſovereignty. But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor? Beſides the irreparable diſhonour to the law, the falſifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatening, he would receive encouragement by ſuch a grace to ſpurn more at thy ſovereignty, and oppoſe thy holineſs by running on in a courſe of ſin with hopes of impunity: if the creature be reſtored, it cannot be expected, that he that hath fared ſo well, after the breach of it, ſhould be very careful of a future obſervance: his eaſy re-admiſſion would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou ſhalt ſoon find him caſt off all moral dependance on thee. Shall he be reſtored without any condition, or covenant; he is a creature not to be governed without a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be ſo lightly paſt over? Is it the ſtability of thy word? what reaſon will he have to give credit to that, which he hath found all ready diſregarded by thyſelf? Thy truth in future threatenings will be of no force with him, who hath experienced thy laying it aſide in the former. It is neceſſary therefore that the rebellious creature ſhould be puniſhed for the preſervation of the honour of the law, and the honour of the lawgiver, with all thoſe perfections that are united in the compoſure of it.

Mercy

Mercy doth not want a plea.—It is true indeed, the ſin of man wants not its aggravations: he hath ſlighted thy goodneſs, and accepted thy enemy as his counſellor; but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was: he had a tempter, and the devil had none: he had, I acknowledge, an underſtanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it; yet he was mutable and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult taſk that was ſet him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon him; yet he had a brutiſh part, as well as a rational, and ſenſe as well as ſoul; whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual ſpirit. Did God create the world to ſuffer an eternal diſhonour, in letting himſelf be outwitted by ſatan, and his work wreſted out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counſel preſently ſink into irreparable deſtruction, and the honour of an almighty and wiſe work be loſt in the ruin of the creature? this would ſeem contrary to the nature of thy goodneſs, to make man only to render him miſerable: to deſign him in his creation for the ſervice of the devil, and not for the ſervice of his creator. What elſe could be the iſſue, if the chief work of thy hand, defaced preſently after the erecting, ſhould for ever remain in this marred condition; what can be expected upon the continuance of his miſery, but a perpetual hatred, and enmity of thy creature againſt thee? Did God in creation deſign his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern? Shall the curious workmanſhip of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be ſo ſoon defaced, and remain in that blotted condition for ever? This fall thou couldſt not but in the treaſures of thy infinite knowledge foreſee; why hadſt thou goodneſs then to create him in an integrity, if thou wouldſt not have mercy to pity him in miſery?

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Shall thy enemy for ever trample upon the honour of thy work, and triumph over the glory of God, and applaud himſelf in the ſucceſs of his ſubtilty? Shall thy creature only paſſively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a compaſſionater? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as juſtice? Shall juſtice ingroſs all, and I never come into view? It is reſolved already, that the fallen angels ſhall be no ſubjects for me to exerciſe myſelf upon; and I have no leſs reaſon than before to plead for them: they fell with a full conſent of will, without any motion from another; and not content with their own apoſtacy, they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth, as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the beſt part of the creation below: ſhall ſatan plunge the whole creation in the ſame irreparable ruin with himſelf? If the creature be reſtored, will he contract a boldneſs in ſin by impurity? Haſt thou not a grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as a compaſſion to recover him from miſery? What will hinder, but that ſuch a grace, which hath eſtabliſhed the ſtanding angels, may eſtabliſh this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exerciſing myſelf on men, as I have been from devils, a whole ſpecies is loſt; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the ſtage: if thou wilt quite ruin him by juſtice, and create another world, and another man, if he ſtand, thy bounty will be eminent, yet there is no room for mercy to act, unleſs by the commiſſion of ſin, he expoſeth himſelf to miſery; and if ſin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then, if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodneſs, wiſdom, and power: ſin entering into theſe worlds, will be perpetually puniſhed by juſtice; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, will for ever be commanded ſilence, and lye wrapt up in an eternal darkneſs. Take occaſion now therefore to ex-

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poſe me to the knowledge of thy creature, ſince without miſery, mercy can never ſet foot into the world.

Mercy pleads, if man be ruined, the creation is in vain; juſtice pleads, if man be not ſentenced, the law is in vain; truth backs juſtice, and grace abets mercy. What ſhall be done in this ſeeming contradiction? mercy is not manifeſted, if man be not pardoned; juſtice will complain, if man be not puniſhed.

An expedient is found out by the wiſdom of God to anſwer thoſe demands, and adjuſt the differences between them.—The wiſdom of God anſwers, I will ſatisfy your pleas. The pleas of juſtice ſhall be ſatisfied in puniſhing, and the pleas of mercy ſhall be received in pardoning; juſtice ſhall not complain for want of puniſhment, nor mercy for want of compaſſion. I will have an infinite ſacrifice to content juſtice; and the virtue and fruit of that ſacrifice ſhall delight mercy. Here ſhall juſtice have puniſhment to accept, and mercy ſhall have pardon to beſtow. The rights of both are preſerved, and the demands of both amicably accorded in puniſhment and pardon, by transferring the puniſhment of our crimes upon a ſurety, exacting a recompence from his blood by juſtice, and conferring life and ſalvation upon us by mercy, without the expence of one drop of our own. Thus juſtice is ſatisfied in its ſeverities, and mercy in its indulgences. The riches of grace are twiſted with the terrors of wrath. The bowels of mercy are wound about the flaming ſword of juſtice, and the ſword of juſtice protects and ſecures the bowels of mercy. Thus is God righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjuſt; his righteouſneſs inviolable, and the world recoverable. Thus is a reſplendent mercy brought forth in the midſt of all the curſes, confuſions, and wrath threatened to the offender.

This is the admirable temperament found out by the wiſdom of God: his juſtice is honoured in the ſufferings of man's ſurety; and his mercy is honoured in the application of the propitiation to the offender. Rom. iii. 24, 25, *Being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God.* Had we in our perſons been ſacrifices to juſtice, mercy had for ever been unknown; had we been ſolely foſtered by mercy, juſtice had for ever been ſecluded; had we, being guilty, been abſolved, mercy might have rejoiced, and juſtice might have complained; had we been ſolely puniſhed, juſtice would have triumphed, and mercy grieved. But by this medium of redemption, neither hath ground of complaint: juſtice hath nothing to charge, when the puniſhment is inflicted; mercy hath whereof to boaſt when the ſurety is accepted. The debt of the ſinner is transferred upon the ſurety, that the merit of the ſurety may be conferred upon the ſinner; ſo that God now deals with our ſins in a way of conſuming juſtice, and with our perſons in a way of relieving mercy. It is highly better, and more glorious, than if the claim of one had been granted, with the excluſion of the demand of the other: it had then been either an unrighteous mercy, or a mercileſs juſtice; it is now a righteous mercy, and a merciful juſtice.

2. The wiſdom of God appears in the ſubject or perſon wherein theſe were accorded; the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed Trinity.—There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other perſon, according to the order of the perſons, and the ſeveral functions of the perſons, as repreſented in ſcripture. The Father, after creation, is the law-giver, and preſents man with the image of his own holineſs, and the

way to his creature's happineſs: but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy a felicity. Redemption was then neceſſary; not that it was neceſſary for God to redeem man, but it was neceſſary for man's happineſs, that he ſhould be recovered. To this the ſecond perſon is appointed, that by communion with him, man might derive a happineſs, and be brought again to God. But ſince man was blind in his underſtanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there muſt be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to underſtand, and accept of this redemption: and this work is aſſigned to the third perſon, the Holy Ghoſt.

It was not congruous that the Father ſhould aſſume human nature, and ſuffer in it for the redemption of man.—He was firſt in order, he was the law-giver, and therefore to be the judge. As law-giver, it was not convenient he ſhould ſtand in the ſtead of the law-breaker; and as judge, it was as little convenient that he ſhould be reputed a malefactor: that he who had made a law againſt ſin, denounced a penalty upon the commiſſion of ſin, and whoſe part it was actually to puniſh the ſinner, ſhould become ſin for the wilful tranſgreſſor of his law. He being the rector, how could he be an advocate and interceſſor to himſelf? how could he be the judge and the ſacrifice? a judge, and yet a mediator to himſelf? If he had been the ſacrifice, there muſt be ſome perſon to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the ſentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son ſhould ſit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father ſtand at the bar, and be reſponſible to the Son? That the Son ſhould be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal? that the Father ſhould be bruiſed by the Son, as the Son was by the Father; that the Son ſhould awaken a ſword againſt the Father, as the Father did againſt the Son;

Son; that the Father ſhould be ſent by the Son as the Son was by the Father: the order of the perſons in the bleſſed Trinity had been inverted and diſturbed. Had the Father been ſent, he had not been firſt in order; the ſender is before the perſon ſent: as the Father begets, and the Son is begotten, John i. 14. ſo the Father ſends, and the Son is ſent. He whoſe order is to ſend, cannot properly ſend himſelf.

Nor was it congruous that the Spirit ſhould be ſent upon this affair.—If the Holy Ghoſt had been ſent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the perſons had alſo been inverted: the Spirit then, who was third in order, had been ſecond in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Chriſt, and ſhew it unto us, John i. 15. As the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, ſo the proper function and operation of it, was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son: had the Spirit been ſent to redeem us, and the Son ſent by the Father, and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us; the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as ſender, had been in order before the Son; whereas the Spirit is called the Spirit of Chriſt, as ſent by Chriſt from the Father, Gal. iv. 6. John xv. 27. But as the order of the works, ſo the order of the perſons is preſerved in their ſeveral operations. Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption ſuppoſeth the exiſtence and the miſery of a perſon redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, ſo redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption ſuppoſeth the being of the creature, ſo application of redemption ſuppoſeth the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of theſe works, is the order of the operations of the three perſons. Creation belongs to

the Father, the firſt perſon. Redemption, the ſecond work, is the function of the Son, the ſecond perſon. Application, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghoſt, the third perſon. The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghoſt applies it. He purifies our ſouls to underſtand, believe, and love theſe myſteries. He forms Chriſt in the womb of the ſoul, as he did the body of Chriſt in the womb of the virgin. As the Spirit of God *moved upon the waters*, to garniſh and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed, Gen. i. 2. ſo he moves upon the heart, to ſupple it to a compliance with Chriſt, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the ſoul, after the foundation is laid.

The Son pays the price that was due from us to God, and the Spirit is the earneſt of the promiſes of life and glory purchaſed by the merit of that death. It is to be obſerved, that the Father, under the diſpenſation of the law, propoſed the commands with the promiſes and threatenings, to the underſtanding of men and Chriſt, under the diſpenſation of grace, when he was upon the earth, propoſeth the goſpel as the means of ſalvation, exhorts to faith as the condition of ſalvation; but it was neither the function of the one, or the other, to diſplay ſuch an efficacy in the underſtanding and will, to make men believe and obey, and therefore there were ſuch few converſions in the time of Chriſt, by his miracles: but this work was reſerved, for the fuller and brighter appearance of the Spirit, whoſe office it was to convince the world of the neceſſity of a redeemer, becauſe of their loſt condition; of the perſon of the redeemer, the Son of God; of the ſufficiency and efficacy of redemption, becauſe of his righteouſneſs and acceptation by the Father. The wiſdom of God is ſeen in preparing and preſenting the objects, and then in making impreſſion

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of them upon the ſubjects he intends. And thus is the order of the three perſons preſerved.

The ſecond perſon had the greateſt congruity to this work.—He by whom God created the world, was moſt conveniently employed in reſtoring the defaced world: who more fit to recover it from its lapſed ſtate, than he that had erected it in its primitive ſtate? Heb. i. 2. *He was the light of men* in creation, and therefore it was moſt reaſonable he ſhould be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the divine image, than he that firſt formed it? Who fitter to ſpeak for us to God, than he who was *the word?* John i. 1. Who could better intercede with the Father, than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who ſo fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the *Heir of all things?* Who fitter and better to prevail for us to have the right of children, than he that poſſeſſed it by nature? We fell from being the ſons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted ſtate, than the Son of God? herein was an expreſſion of the richer grace, becauſe the firſt ſin was immediately againſt the wiſdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wiſdom equal to God: that that perſon, who was the wiſdom of God, ſhould be made a ſacrifice for the expiation of the ſin againſt wiſdom.

3. The wiſdom of God is ſeen in the two natures of Chriſt, whereby this redemption was accompliſhed.—The union of the two natures was the foundation of the union of God, and the fallen creature.

The union itſelf is admirable: *the word is made fleſh*, John i. 14. One *equal with God in the form of a ſervant*, Phil. ii. 7. When the apoſtle ſpeaks of *God manifeſted in the fleſh*, he ſpeaks *the wiſdom of God in a myſtery*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. That which is incomprehenſible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never

knew till they beheld it. I am ſure, under the law the figures of the cherubims were placed in the ſanctuary with their faces looking towards the propitiatory in a perpetual poſture of contemplation and admiration, Exod. xxxvii. 9. to which the apoſtle alludes, 1 Pet. i. 12.

Myſterious is the wiſdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightineſs and weakneſs, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing ſubject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature ſubject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be ſubjected to the law; to be *God bleſſed for ever*, in the boſom of his Father, and an infant expoſed to calamities from the womb of his mother: terms ſeeming moſt diſtant from union, moſt incapable of conjunction, to ſhake hands together, to be moſt intimately conjoined; glory and vileneſs, fulneſs and emptineſs, heaven and earth; the creature with the creator; he that made all things, in one perſon with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man, in one: that which is moſt ſpiritual to partake of that which is carnal fleſh and blood: one with the Father in his godhead, one with us in his manhood: the godhead to be in him in the fulleſt perfection, and the manhood in the greateſt purity: the creature one with the creator, and the creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehenſible wiſdom of God declared in the word being made fleſh.

In the manner of this union.—An union of two natures, yet no natural union. It tranſcends all the unions viſible among creatures: it is not like the union of ſtones in a building, or of two pieces of timber faſtened together, which touch one another only in their ſuperfices and outſide, without any intimacy with one another. By ſuch a kind of union, God would not be man: the word could not ſo be made fleſh. Nor is it a union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the members

members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole reſults from the parts, and depends upon the parts: but Chriſt being God, is independent upon any thing. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together; for they are ſo incorporated, as not to be diſtinguiſhed from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the divine nature are diſtinguiſhable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the ſoul and body, ſo as that the deity is the form of the humanity, as the ſoul is the form of the body: for as the ſoul is but a part of the man, ſo the divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the ſoul is in a ſtate of imperfection, without that which it is to inform; ſo the divinity of Chriſt would have been imperfect, till it had aſſumed the humanity. And ſo the perfection of an eternal deity would have depended on a creature of time.

This union of two natures in Chriſt is incomprehenſible: and it is a myſtery we cannot arrive to the top of, how the divine nature, which is the ſame with that of the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, ſhould be united to the human nature; without its being ſaid, that the Father and the Holy Ghoſt were united to the fleſh; but the ſcripture doth not encourage any ſuch notion: it ſpeaks only of the Word, the perſon of the word being made fleſh. And in his being made fleſh, diſtinguiſheth him from the Father, as *the only begotten of the Father*, John i. 14. The perſon of the Son was the term of this union.

This union doth not confound the properties of the deity, and thoſe of the humanity. They remain diſtinct and entire in each other. The deity is not changed into fleſh, nor the fleſh transformed into God: they are diſtinct and yet united: they

are conjoined; and yet unmixt: the dues of either nature are preſerved. It is impoſſible that the majeſty of the divinity can receive an alteration: it is as impoſſible that the meaneſs of the humanity can receive the impreſſions of the deity, ſo as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphoſed into the creator, and temporary fleſh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity: as the ſoul and body are united, and make one perſon, yet the ſoul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the ſoul. There is a change made in the humanity by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the deity; as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the ſun, not in the ſun, which communicates that brightneſs to the air. *Athanaſius* makes the *burning buſh* to be a type of Chriſt's incarnation, Exod. iii. 2. The fire ſignifying the divine nature, and the buſh the human. The buſh is a branch ſpringing up from the earth, and the fire deſcends from heaven; as the buſh was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the buſh and the fire, yet the properties of the fire ſhined in the buſh, ſo that the whole buſh ſeemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Chriſt, the human nature is not ſwallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it; but ſo united, that the properties of both remain firm: *two* are ſo become *one* that they remain *two* ſtill: one perſon in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the divine, and the weakneſſes of the human. *The fulneſs of the deity dwells bodily in Chriſt*, Col. ii. 9.

The divine nature is united to every part of the humanity.—The whole divinity to the whole humanity; ſo that no part but may be ſaid to be the member of God, as well as the blood is ſaid to be the *blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. By the ſame reaſon it may be ſaid, the hand of God, the eye of God, the

the arm of God. As God is infinitely preſent every where, ſo as to be excluded from no place; ſo is the deity hypoſtatically every where in the humanity not excluded from any part of it; as the light of the ſun in every part of the air; as a ſparkling ſplendor in every part of the diamond. Therefore it is concluded by all that acknowledge the deity of Chriſt, that when his ſoul was ſeparated from the body, the deity remained united both to ſoul and body, as light doth in every part of a broken cryſtal.

Therefore *perpetually united*, Coloſſ. ii. 9. The *fulneſs of the godhead dwells in him bodily.* It dwells in him, not lodges in him as a traveller in an inn: it reſides in him as a fixed habitation. As God deſcribes the perpetuity of his preſence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it, Exod. xxix. 44. ſo doth the apoſtle the inſeparable duration of the deity in the humanity, and the indiſſoluble union of the humanity with the deity. It was united on earth, it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the ſpirit came upon the apoſtles, were a temporary repreſentation, not a thing united perpetually to the perſon of the Holy Ghoſt.

It was a perſonal union.—It was not an union of perſons, though it was a perſonal union: ſo Davenant expounds, Col. ii. 9. Chriſt did not take the perſon of man, but the nature of man into ſubſiſtence with himſelf. The body and ſoul of Chriſt were not united in themſelves, had no ſubſiſtence in themſelves, till they were united to the perſon of the Son of God. If the perſon of a man were united to him, the human nature would have been the nature of the perſon ſo united to him, and not the nature of the Son of God, Heb. ii. 14, 16. *Foraſmuch then as the children are partakers of fleſh and blood, he alſo himſelf likewiſe took part of the ſame, that through death he might deſtroy him, that had*

had the power of death, that is, the devil. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham. He took fleſh and blood to be his own nature, perpetually to ſubſiſt in the perſon of the *Logos*, which muſt be by a perſonal union, or no way: the deity united to the humanity, and both natures to be one perſon. This is the myſterious and manifold wiſdom of God.

The end of this union.

He was hereby fitted to be Mediator.—He hath ſomething like to man, and ſomething like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a diſtance from God: if he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a diſtance from man. He is a true mediator between mortal ſinners and the Immortal Righteous One. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and near to God by the perfections of the divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature, as he is to God in the divine. Nothing that belongs to the deity, but he poſſeſſes; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with.

He had both the nature which had offended, and that nature which was offended; a nature to pleaſe God, and a nature to pleaſure us: a nature whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and underſtood the glory due to him, and conſequently the greatneſs of the offence, which was to be meaſured by the dignity of his perſon: and a nature whereby, he might be ſenſible of the miſeries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might both have compaſſion on him, and make due ſatisfaction for him. He had two diſtinct natures, capable of the affections and ſentiments of the two perſons he was to accord; he was a juſt judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other. He could not have this full and perfect underſtanding, if he did

did not poſſeſs the perfections of the one, and the qualities of the other: the one fitted him for things appertaining to God, Heb. v. 1. and the other furniſhed him with a ſenſe of the infirmities of man, Heb. iv. 15.

He was hereby fitted for the working out the happineſs of man.—A divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God.

He had a nature whereby to ſuffer for us, and a nature whereby to be meritorious in thoſe ſufferings.—A nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his ſufferings ſufficient for all that embraced him. A nature capable to be expoſed to the flames of divine wrath, and another nature incapable to be cruſhed by the weight, or conſumed by the heat of it: a human nature to ſuffer, and ſtand a ſacrifice in the ſtead of man; a divine nature to ſanctify theſe ſufferings, and fill the noſtrils of God with a ſweet ſavour, and thereby atone his wrath: the one to bear the ſtroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his ſufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in ſuffering; and could he otherwiſe have ſuffered, his ſufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his ſufferings had not been meritoriouſly and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the legal ſacrifices. Nothing leſs than God, could have ſatisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing leſs than God, could have countervailed the torments due to the offending creature: nothing leſs than God, could have reſcued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us.

He had therefore a nature to be compaſſionate to us, and victorious for us.—A nature ſenſibly to compaſſionate us, and another nature to render

thoſe

thoſe compaſſions effectual for our relief; he had the compaſſions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us: a nature to diſarm the devil for us, and another nature to be ſenſible of the working of the devil in us, and againſt us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental ſenſe of our miſery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquiſhed our enemies: had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death.

A nature efficaciouſly to inſtruct us.—As man, he was to inſtruct us ſenſibly; as God, he was to inſtruct us infallibly. A nature whereby he might converſe with us, and a nature whereby he might influence us in thoſe converſes. A human mouth to miniſter inſtruction to man, and a divine power to imprint it with efficacy.

A nature to be a pattern to us.—A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his poſterity. A divine nature ſhining in the human, the image of the inviſible God in the glaſs of our fleſh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation. Col. i. 15, *The image of the inviſible God, and the firſt-born of every creature*, in conjunction. The virtues of the deity are ſweetened and tempered by the union with the humanity, as the beams of the ſun are by ſhining through a coloured glaſs, which condeſcends more to the weakneſs of our eye.

Thus the perfections of the inviſible God, breaking through the firſt-born of every creature, glittering in Chriſt's created ſtate, became more ſenſible for contemplation by our mind, and more imitable for conformity in our practice.

A nature to be a ground of confidence in our approach to God.—A nature wherein we may behold

hold him, and wherein we may approach to him: a nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to aſſure us; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us: but now we are allured by his human nature, and aſſured by his divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was deſired by us, but our guilt ſtifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the divine nature, would have dampt our hopes of ſpeeding; but ſince theſe two natures, ſo far diſtant, are met in a marriage-knot, we have a ground of hope, nay, an earneſt, that the creator and believing creature ſhall meet and converſe together. And ſince our ſins are expiated by the death of the human nature, in conjunction with the divine, our guilt, upon believing, ſhall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have aſſured us an approach to God: had he been only God, his juſtice would not have admitted us to approach to him; he had been too terrible for guilty perſons, and too holy for polluted perſons to come near him: but by being made man his juſtice is tempered, and by his being God and man, his mercy is inſured. A human nature he had, one with us, that we might be related to God, as one with him.

A nature to derive all good to us.—Had he not been man, we had had no ſhare or part in him: a ſatisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happineſs; he could not have had power to convey ſo great a good to us, had he been only man; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteouſneſs, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance; as God, he is the ſpring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of unction, we find *rivers of water flowing, to make glad*

glad the city of God. Believers are his branches, and draw ſap from him as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endleſs duration of it from his divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a ſtate to obey the law: had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us.

How ſhould this myſtery be ſtudied by us, which would afford us both admiration and content! Admiration, in the incomprehenſibleneſs of it; contentment, in the fitneſs of the mediator. By this wiſdom of God we receive the props of our faith, and the fruits of joy and peace. Wiſdom conſiſts in chuſing fit means, and conducting them in ſuch a method, as may reach with good ſucceſs the variety of marks which are aimed at. Thus hath the wiſdom of God ſet forth a Mediator, ſuited to our wants; fitted for our ſupplies, and ordered ſo, the whole affair by the union of theſe two natures in the perſon of the Redeemer, that there could be no diſappointment, by all the buſtle, hell and helliſh inſtruments could raiſe againſt it.

4. The wiſdom of God is ſeen in this way of redemption, in vindicating the honour and righteouſneſs of the law, both as to precept and penalty.—The firſt and irreverſible deſign of the law was obedience. The penalty of the law had only entrance upon tranſgreſſion. Obedience was the deſign, and the penalty was added to enforce the obſervance of the precept. Gen. ii. 17, *Thou ſhalt not eat*; there is the precept: *in the day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt die*; there is the penalty. Obedience was our debt to the law, as creatures; puniſhment was due from the law to us as ſinners: we were bound to endure the penalty for our firſt tranſgreſſion, but the penalty did not cancel the bond of future obedience: the penalty had not been incurred without tranſgreſſing the precept; yet the precept was not abrogated by enduring the penalty. Since man ſo ſoon revolted,

and

and by his revolt fell under the threatening, the juſtice of the law had been honoured by man's ſufferings, but the holineſs and equity of the law had been honoured by man's obedience. The wiſdom of God finds out a medium to ſatisfy both: the juſtice of the law is preſerved in the execution of the penalty; and the holineſs of the law is honoured in the obſervance of the precept.

The life of our Saviour is a conformity to the precept, and his death is a conformity to the penalty; the precepts are exactly performed, and the curſe punctually executed, by a voluntary obſerving the one, and a voluntary undergoing the other. It is obeyed as if it had not been tranſgreſt, and executed as if it had not been obeyed.

It became the wiſdom, juſtice, and holineſs of God, as the rector of the world, to exact it, Heb. ii. 10. and it *became* the holineſs of the Mediator to *fulfil all the righteouſneſs of the law*; and thus the honour of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The tranſgreſſion of the law was condemned in the fleſh of the Redeemer, and the righteouſneſs of the law was fulfilled in his perſon: and both theſe acts of obedience, being counted as one righteouſneſs, and imputed to the believing ſinner, render him a ſubject to the law, both in its preceptive and minatory part. By Adam's ſinful acting we were made ſinners, and by Chriſt's righteous acting we are made righteous. Rom. v. 10. *As by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of one ſhall many be made righteous.* The law was obeyed by him, that *the righteouſneſs of it might be fulfilled in us*, Rom. viii. 4. It is not fulfilled in us, or in our actions, by inherency, but fulfilled in us by imputation of that righteouſneſs which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died for us, and roſe again for us, ſo he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well obſerved for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us.

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This juſtification of a ſinner, with the preſervation of the holineſs of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in ſincerity of intention, as well as conformity in action, is the wiſdom of God, the goſpel-wiſdom which David deſires to know, Pſa. li. 6. *Thou deſireſt truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou ſhalt make me to know wiſdom*; or as ſome render it, *the hidden things of wiſdom.* Not an inherent wiſdom in the acknowledgments of his ſin, which he had confeſt before; but the wiſdom of God in providing a medicine, ſo as to keep up the holineſs of the law in the obſervance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the ſinner. In and by this way methodized by the wiſdom of God, all doubts and troubles are diſcharged. Naturally if we take a view of the law to behold its holineſs and juſtice and then of our hearts, to ſee the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holineſs; and after this caſt our eyes upward, and behold a flaming ſword edged with curſes and wrath; is there any matter, but that of terror, afforded by any of theſe? but when we behold, in the life of Chriſt, a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the croſs of Chriſt, a ſuſtaining the minatory part of the law; this wiſdom of God gives a well grounded and rational diſmiſs to all the horrors that can ſeize upon us.

5. The wiſdom of God in redemption is viſible in manifeſting two contrary affections at the ſame time, and in one act: the greateſt hatred of ſin, and the greateſt love to the ſinner. In this way he puniſhes the ſin without ruining the ſinner, and repairs the ruins of the ſinner, without indulging the ſin. Here is eternal love, and eternal hatred; a condemning the ſin to what it merited, and an advancing the ſinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choiceſt love, and the deepeſt hatred manifeſted. An implacableneſs againſt the ſin, and

a placableneſs to the ſinner. His hatred of ſin hath been diſcovered in other ways; in puniſhing the devil without remedy; ſentencing man to an expulſion from paradiſe, though ſeduced by another; in accurſing the ſerpent, an irrational creature, though but a miſguided inſtrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of ſin, and the ſprinklings of his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified conſciences confirm it. But what are all theſe teſtimonies to the higheſt evidence that can poſſibly be given in the ſheathing the ſword of his wrath in the heart of his Son? If a father ſhould order his ſon to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to priſon, ſeem to throw off all affection of a father for the ſeverity of a judge, condemn his ſon to a horrible death, be a ſpectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from aſſuaging his miſery, regard it rather with joy than ſorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and ſtand by to ſee him drink it off to the bottom, dregs and all, and flaſh frowns in his face all the while; and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of ſome ſubjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon ſealed by the blood of the ſon the ſufferer: all this would evidence his deteſtation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels; his hatred to their crime, and his love to their welfare. This did God do; He *delivered Chriſt up for our offences*, Rom. viii. 32. *the Father gave him the cup*, John xviii. 18. The Lord *bruiſed him with pleaſure*, Iſa. liii. 10. and that for ſin: he transferred upon the ſhoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be reſtored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the ſin ſo, as to condemn it for ever, and wrap it up in the curſe he had threatened; and loves the ſinner believing and, repenting ſo, as to mount him to an expectation of a happineſs exceeding the firſt ſtate, both in glory and

perpetuity. Inſtead of an earthly paradiſe, lays the foundation of an heavenly manſion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of miſery, ſeparates the comfortable light of the ſun, from the ſcorching heat we had deſerved at his hands. Thus hath God's hatred of ſin been manifeſted. He is at an eternal defiance with ſin, yet nearer in alliance with the ſinner than he was before the revolt: as if man's miſerable fall had endeared him to the judge. This is the wiſdom and prudence of *grace wherein God hath abounded*, Eph. i. 9. A wiſdom in twiſting the happy reſtoration of the broken amity, with an everlaſting curſe, upon that which made the breach, both upon ſin the cauſe, and upon Satan the ſeducer to it. Thus is hatred and love in their higheſt glory manifeſted together: hatred to ſin, in the death of Chriſt, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the ſinner; and love to the ſinner, more than if he had, by an abſolute and ſimple bounty, beſtowed upon him the poſſeſſion of heaven; becauſe the gift of his Son, for ſuch an end, is a greater token of his boundleſs affections, than a reinſtating man in paradiſe. Thus is the wiſdom of God ſeen in redemption; conſuming the ſin, and recovering the ſinner.

6. The wiſdom of God is evident in overturning the devil's empire, by the nature he had vanquiſhed, and by ways quite contrary to what that malicious ſpirit could imagine.—The devil indeed read his own doom in the firſt promiſe, and found his ruin reſolved upon, by the means of the ſeed of the woman, but by what ſeed, was not ſo eaſily known to him. And the methods whereby it was to be brought about, was a myſtery kept ſecret from the malicious devils, ſince it was not diſcovered to the obedient angels. He might know from Iſa. liii. that the Redeemer was aſſured to divide the ſpoil with the ſtrong, and reſcue a part of the loſt creation out of his hands; and that this was to be effected,

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by making his ſoul an offering for ſin: but could he imagine which way his ſoul was to be made ſuch an offering? He ſhrewdly ſuſpected Chriſt juſt after his Inauguration into his office by baptiſm, to be the Son of God. But did he ever dream that the Meſſiah, by dying as a reputed malefactor, ſhould be a ſacrifice for the expiation of the ſin, the devil had introduced by his ſubtilty? Did he ever imagine a croſs ſhould diſpoſſes him of his crown, and that dying groans ſhould wreſt the victory out of his hands?

He was conquered by that nature he had caſt headlong into ruin: a woman, by his ſubtilty, was the occaſion of our death; and a woman, by the conduct of the only wiſe God, brings forth the author of our life, and the conqueror of our enemies. The fleſh of the old Adam had infected us, and the fleſh of the new Adam cures us. 1 Cor. xv. 21. *By man came death; by man alſo came the reſurrection from the dead.* We are killed by the old Adam, and raiſed by the new. As among the Iſraelites, a fiery ſerpent gave the wound, and a brazen ſerpent adminiſters the cure. The nature that was deceived bruiſeth the deceiver, and raiſeth up the foundations of his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counſels he took to ſecure his poſſeſſion, and loſes the victory by the ſame means whereby he thought to preſerve it.

His tempting the Jews to the ſin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary ſucceſs to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The firſt death he brought upon Adam, ruined us, and the death he brought by his inſtruments upon the ſecond Adam, reſtored us. By a tree, if one may ſo ſay, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is diſcharged of his power over us, Heb. ii. 14. *Through death he deſtroyed him that had the power of death.* And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to

confirm and enlarge it. And is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains, and deprive the Creator of the world of his purpoſed honour. What deeper counſel could he reſolve upon for his own ſecurity, than to be inſtrumental in the death of him, who was God, the terror of the devil himſelf, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with diſgrace in the ſight of a multitude of men? Thus did the wiſdom of God ſhine forth in reſtoring us by methods ſeemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the ſuſpicion of a ſubtle devil, whom he intended to baffle.

Could he imagine that we ſhould be healed by ſtripes, quickened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a croſs, advanced to the higheſt honour by the loweſt humility, comforted by ſorrows, glorified by diſgrace, abſolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the ſweeteſt honey ſhould at once ſpring out of the belly of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the boſom of the living God? how wonderful is this wiſdom of God! that the ſeed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a ſtable, ſpending his days in affliction, miſery and poverty, without any pomp and ſplendor, paſſing ſome time in a carpenter's ſhop, with carpenters tools, and afterwards expoſed to a horrible and diſgraceful death, ſhould by this way pull down the gates of hell, ſubvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power, which he had ſo long exerciſed over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for awhile in the chains of death, and arrived to a principality over the moſt malicious powers by being a priſoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

7. The wiſdom of God appears, in giving us this way the ſureſt ground of comfort and the ſtrongeſt incentive to obedience.—The rebel is reconciled,

ciled, and the rebellion ſhamed; God is propitiated and the ſinner ſanctified by the ſame blood. What can more contribute to our comfort and confidence, than God's richeſt gift to us? What can more inflame our love to him, than our recovery from death by the oblation of his Son to miſery and death for us? it doth as much engage our duty as ſecure our happineſs. It preſents God glorious and gracious, and therefore every way fit to be truſted in regard of the intereſt of his own glory in it, and in regard of the effuſions of his grace by it. It renders the creature obliged in the higheſt manner, and ſo awakens his induſtry to the ſtricteſt and nobleſt obedience. Nothing ſo effectual as a crucified Chriſt to wean us from ſin and ſtifle all motions of deſpair; a means, in regard of the juſtice ſignalized in it, to make man to hate the ſin which had ruined him; and a means, in regard of the love expreſt, to make him *delight in that law* he had violated, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *The love of Chriſt* and therefore the love of God expreſt in it, *conſtrains us no longer to live to ourſelves.*

It is a ground of the higheſt comfort and confidence in God. Since he hath given ſuch an evidence of his impartial truth to his threatening for the honour of his juſtice, we need not queſtion but he will be as punctual to his promiſe for the honour of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, ſince he hath redeemed us in ſuch a way as glorifies the ſteadineſs of his veracity, as well as the ſeverity of his juſtice; we may well truſt him for the performance of his promiſe, ſince we have experience of the execution of his threatening; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accompliſh the one, as his juſt truth did to inflict the other. The goodneſs which ſhone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with ſtronger beams in redemption.

Fifthly, The Uſe.

If wiſdom be an excellency of the divine nature, then Chriſt's deity may hence be aſſerted.—Wiſdom is the emphatical title of Chriſt in ſcripture, Prov. viii. 12, 13, 31. where Wiſdom is brought in ſpeaking as a diſtinct perſon; aſcribing counſel, and underſtanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itſelf. He is called alſo the power of God, and the wiſdom of God. And the ancients generally underſtood that place, Col. ii. 3. *In him are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*, as an aſſertion of the godhead of Chriſt, in regard of the infiniteneſs of his knowledge; referring wiſdom to his knowledge of divine things; and knowledge to his underſtanding of all human things. But the natural ſenſe of the place ſeems to be this, that all wiſdom and knowledge is diſplayed by Chriſt in the goſpel; and the words, refer either to Chriſt, or the myſtery of God ſpoken of, ver. 2. But the deity of Chriſt, in regard of infinite wiſdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things; both which are aſcribed to him in ſcripture. The firſt aſcribed to him, John i. 3. *All things were made by him*; and ver. 27. *Without him was not any thing made, that was made.* The ſecond, John v. 22. *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son*; and both put together, Col. ii. 16, 17.

God's Power.

Job xxvi. 14.

LO! THESE ARE PARTS OF HIS WAYS, BUT HOW LITTLE A PORTION IS HEARD OF HIM? BUT THE THUNDER OF HIS POWER WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?

THE text is a lofty declaration of the divine power, with a particular note of attention, *Lo!*

In the expreſſions of it, in the works of creation and providence, *Lo, theſe are his ways*; ways and works excelling any created ſtrength, referring to the little ſummary of them he had made before.

In the inſufficiency of theſe ways to meaſure his power, *But how little a portion is heard of him?*

In the incomprehenſibleneſs of it, *The thunder of his power who can underſtand?*

Infinite and incomprehenſible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expreſſed, in part, in his works: or, though there be a mighty expreſſion of divine power in his works, yet an incomprehenſible power pertains to his nature—*The thunder of his power who can underſtand?*

In particular, I ſhall ſhew

1. The nature of God's power.
2. Reaſons to prove that God muſt needs be powerful.
3. How his power appears; in creation, in government, and in redemption.
4. The uſe.

Firſt, What this power is; or the nature of it.

This power is divided ordinarily into abſolute and ordinate.—Abſolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is poſſible to be done: Ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exerciſed. Which are not diſtinct powers, but one and the ſame power; his ordinate power is a part of his abſolute; for if he had not a power to do every thing that he could will, he might not have a power to do every thing that he doth will.

The object of his abſolute power is all things poſſible; ſuch things that imply not a contradiction, ſuch that are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, and ſuch as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done: thoſe things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are ſeveral, as to make a thing which is paſt not to be paſt. As for example, the world is created; God could have choſe whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to diſſolve it; but after it was created, and when it is diſſolved, it will be eternally true, that the world was created, and that it was diſſolved; for it is impoſſible, that that which was once true, ſhould ever be falſe: if it be true that the world was created, it will for ever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwiſe. And alſo, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impoſſible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God: as it is impoſſible for his nature to die and periſh; impoſſible for him in regard of truth, to lie and deceive. But of this hereafter; only at preſent to underſtand the object of God's Abſolute Power to be things poſſible, that is, poſſible in nature; not by any ſtrength in themſelves, or of themſelves; for nothing hath no ſtrength, and every thing is nothing

nothing before it comes into being: ſo God by his abſolute power might have prevented the ſin of the fallen angels, and ſo have preſerved them in their firſt habitation. He might by his abſolute power have reſtrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or reſtrained her and Adam from ſwallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his abſolute power, God might have given the reins to Peter to betray his Maſter, as well as to deny him; and employed Judas in the ſame glorious and ſucceſsful ſervice, wherein he employed Paul. By his abſolute power he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptiſt affirms, when he tells us, *That God is able of theſe ſtones* (meaning the ſtones in the wilderneſs, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) *to raiſe up children to Abraham*, Mat. iii. 9. that is, there is a poſſibility of ſuch a thing, there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he pleaſe.

But now the object of his ordinate power, is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him; and becauſe of the divine ordination of things, this power is called ordinate; and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, becauſe of his unchangeableneſs. Both theſe powers are expreſſed, Mat. xxvi. 53. 54. *My Father can ſend twelve legions of angels*, there is his abſolute power; *but how then ſhall the ſcriptures be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?* there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called abſolute; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His abſolute power is neceſſary, and belongs to his nature; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will; a power guided by his will; not, as I ſaid before, that they are two diſtinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the

the latter is the ſame with the former, only it is guided by his will and wiſdom.

It follows then, that the power of God is that ability and ſtrength whereby he can bring to paſs whatſoever he pleaſes.—Whatſoever his infinite wiſdom can direct, and whatſoever the infinite purity of his will can reſolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not ſignify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act; it is a power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing: as God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power exerciſed and diffuſed, in bringing forth and nurſing up its particular objects without, is inconceivably leſs than that ſtrength which is infinite in himſelf, the ſame with his eſſence, and is indeed himſelf: by his power exerciſed he doth whatſoever he actually wills; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatſoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extenſive than their power; and their power more contracted and ſhortened, than their will: but, as the prophet ſaith, *His counſel ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure*, Iſa. xlvi. 10. His power is as great as his will, that is, whatſoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compaſs of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet ſuppoſing he ſhould will it, he is able to perform it: ſo that you muſt in your notion of divine power, enlarge it further than to think, God can only do what he he hath reſolved to do; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act, as he hath an infinite capacity of will to reſolve.

The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature; it contributes life and activity to all the other perfections.—How vain would be his eternal counſels, if power did not ſtep in to execute them: his mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were deſtitute of power to relieve; and his

his juſtice a ſlighted ſcarecrow, without power to puniſh; his promiſes an empty ſound, without power to accompliſh them. As holineſs is the beauty, ſo power is the life of all his attributes in their exerciſe; and as holineſs, ſo power is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wiſdom to attain his ends, without interruption: he hath a powerful mercy to remove our miſery; a powerful juſtice to lay all miſery upon offenders: he hath a powerful truth to perform his promiſes; an infinite power to beſtow rewards and inflict penalties. It is to this purpoſe power is firſt put in the two things which the pſalmiſt had heard, Pſa. lxii. 11, 12. *Twice have I heard*, or *two things have I heard*; firſt power, then mercy and juſtice, included in that expreſſion, *Thou rendereſt to every man according to his work*: in every perfection of God he heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on, when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world; by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every ſtage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

His power is of a larger extent in regard of its objects than ſome other attributes—It doth not always ſuppoſe an object, but conſtitutes an object. It ſuppoſeth an object in the act of preſervation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy ſuppoſeth an object miſerable, yet doth not make it ſo. Juſtice ſuppoſeth an object criminal, but doth not conſtitute it ſo: mercy ſuppoſeth him miſerable, to relieve him; juſtice ſuppoſeth him criminal, to puniſh him: but power ſuppoſeth not a thing in real exiſtence, but as poſſible; or rather, it is from power that any thing hath a poſſibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing.

Again, power extends further than either mercy or juſtice. Mercy hath particular objects, which juſtice

juſtice ſhall not at laſt be willing to puniſh; and juſtice hath particular objects, which mercy at laſt ſhall not be willing to refreſh: but power doth, and always will extend to the objects of both mercy and juſtice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor juſtice, nor of rewarding goodneſs: a creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodneſs; a creature, as miſerable, is the object of compaſſionate mercy; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging juſtice: but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with thoſe attributes of goodneſs, mercy, and juſtice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, juſtice, truth, and wiſdom, exerciſe themſelves about, have a poſſibility and an actual being from this perfection of divine power. It is power firſt frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or juſtice, though it doth not give an immediate qualification for the exerciſe of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and ſo confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miſerable by its own fault, and puniſhable by God's juſtice; or pitiable by God's compaſſion, and relievable by God's mercy: but it doth not make him ſinful, whereby he became miſerable and puniſhable.

Secondly, Reaſons to prove God to be omnipotent.

The ſcripture deſcribes God by this attribute of power. Pſa. cxv. 3. *He hath done whatſoever he pleaſed.* It ſometimes ſets forth his power in a way of deriſion of thoſe that ſeem to doubt of it. When Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* They deſerve to be ſcoffed, that will deſpoil God of his ſtrength, and meaſure him by their ſhallow models. And when Moſes uttered ſomething of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Iſraelites, beſides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious ſcoff; *Shall the flocks and the herds*

herds be ſlain for them to ſuffice them? Or ſhall all the fiſh of the ſea be gathered together for them? &c. Numb. xi. 23. God takes him up ſhort, ver. 23. *Is the Lord's hand waxed ſhort?* What, can any weakneſs ſeize upon my hand? Can I not draw out of my own treaſures what is needful for a ſupply? The hand of God is not at one time ſtrong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an out-ſtretched arm; becauſe the ſtrength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his ſtrength. Sometimes, according to the different manifeſtation of it, it is expreſt by finger, when a leſs power is evidenced; by hand, when ſomething greater; by arm, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is alſo almighty, without limits of ſtrength. As he cannot be ſaid to be more in being now than he was before, ſo he is neither more nor leſs in ſtrength than he was before: as he cannot ceaſe to be, ſo he cannot ceaſe to be powerful, becauſe he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonſtrable; God is called the God of Gods, *El Elohim*, the Mighty of Mighties, whence all mighty perſons have their activity and vigor: he is called the Lord of Hoſts, as being the creator and conductor of the heavenly militia.

1. The power that is in creatures demonſtrates a greater and an inconceivable power in God.—Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature: no creature but can act ſomething: the ſun warms and enlightens every thing: it ſends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the ſea: all generations owe themſelves to its inſtrumental virtue: how powerful is a ſmall ſeed to riſe into a mighty tree with a lofty top, and extenſive branches, and ſends forth other ſeeds, which can ſtill multiply

multiply into numberleſs plants? How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed ſo ſmall a creature as a ſeed with ſo fruitful an activity? yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature: God is both the producing and preſerving cauſe of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature: the power of every creature belongs to him as the fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the firſt being, he is the original of all being; as he is the firſt good, he is the ſpring of all goodneſs; as he is the firſt truth, he is the ſource of all truth; ſo as he is the firſt power, he is the fountain of all power.

All the power which is diſtinct in the creatures, muſt be united in God.—One creature hath a ſtrength to do this, another to do that; every creature is as a ciſtern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain; all are diſtinct ſtreams from God: but the ſtrength of every creature, though diſtinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the center, whence thoſe lines were drawn, the fountain whence thoſe ſtreams were derived: if the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the pſalmiſt ſaith, *excelleth in ſtrength*; how much greater muſt the power of a legion of angels be? How inconceivably ſuperior the power of all thoſe numbers of ſpiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God? Now if all this particular power which is in every angel diſtinct, were compacted in one angel, how would it exceed our underſtanding, and be above our power to form a diſtinct conception of it? What is thus divided in every angel, muſt be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Every thing is in a more noble manner in the fountain, than in the ſtreams which diſtil and deſcend from it. He that is the original of all thoſe diſtinct powers, muſt be the ſeat of all power without

out diſtinction: in him is the union of all without diviſion; what is in them as a quality, is in him as his eſſence. Again, if all the powers of ſeveral creatures, with all their principal qualities and vigors, both of beaſts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one ſubject; as if one lion had the ſtrength of all the lions that ever were; or if one elephant had the ſtrength of all the elephants that ever were; nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and ſtinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vaſt ſtrength; but if the ſtrength of all thoſe thus gathered into one of every kind ſhould be lodged in one ſole creature, one man, would it not be a ſtrength too big for our conception? or ſuppoſe one canon had all the force of all the canons that ever were in the world, what a battery would it make, and, as it were, ſhake the whole frame of heaven and earth? all this ſtrength muſt be much more incomprehenſible in God, all is united in him. If it were in one individual created nature, it would ſtill be but a finite power in a finite nature: but in God it is infinite and immenſe.

2. If there were not an incomprehenſible power in God, he would not be infinitely perfect.—God is the firſt being; it can only be ſaid of him, *eſt*, he is. All other things are nothing to him, *Leſs than nothing, and vanity*, Iſa. xl. 17. and *reputed as nothing*, Dan. iv. 35. All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and ſtrength, are counted as if they were not; juſt in compariſon with him and his being, as a little mote in the ſun beams: God therefore is a pure being. Any kind of weakneſs whatſoever is a defect, a degree of not being; ſo far as any thing wants this or that power, it may be ſaid not to be. Were there any thing of weakneſs in God, any want of ſtrength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be ſaid of God, he is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of being, and ſo he would not be a pure being,

there

there would be ſomething of not being in him. But God being the firſt being, the only original being, he is infinitely diſtant from not being, and therefore infinitely diſtant from any thing of weakneſs.

3. The ſimplicity of God manifeſts it.—Every ſubſtance, the more ſpiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a ſimple, than in a compounded being. Angels, being ſpirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greateſt ſimplicity, there is the greateſt unity; and where there is the greateſt unity, there is the greateſt power. Where there is a compoſition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power doth ſtill reſide in the faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, he hath the faculty or motion ſtill; but he hath loſt that inſtrument, that part whereby he did manifeſt and put forth that motion: but God being a pure ſpiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of action ariſe either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from ſomething without it. There can be no hindrance to God to do whatſoever he pleaſes; not in himſelf, becauſe he is the moſt ſimple being, hath no contrariety in himſelf, is not compoſed of divers things: and it cannot be from any thing without himſelf, becauſe nothing is equal to him, much leſs ſuperior. He is the greateſt, the ſupreme: all things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can diſappoint his intentions.

4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God.—Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their ſtupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immenſity of divine power. Miracles are ſuch effects as have been wrought without the aſſiſtance and co-operation of natural cauſes, yea contrary, and beſides the ordinary courſe of nature, above the reach of any created

ted power. Miracles have been; and ſaith Bradwardine, "To deny that ever ſuch things were, is uncivil: it is inhuman to deny all the hiſtories of Jews and Chriſtians;" whoſoever denies miracles, muſt deny all poſſibility of miracles, and ſo muſt imagine himſelf fully ſkilled in the extent of divine power. How was the ſun ſuſpended from its motion for ſome hours; the dead raiſed from the grave; thoſe reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diſeaſes; and this by a word ſpeaking? How were the famiſhed lions bridled from exerciſing their rage upon Daniel, expoſed to them for a prey? The activity of the fire curbed for the preſervation of the three children, which proves a deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combuſtible matter, when they are united, unleſs by quenching the fire, or removing the matter: but no created power can reſtrain the fire, ſo long as it remains ſo, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God, in the caſe of the three children, and that of the burning buſh. It was as much miraculous that the buſh ſhould not conſume, as it was natural that it ſhould burn by the efficacy of the fire upon it. No element is ſo obſtinate and deaf, but it hears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature: all the violence of the creature is ſuſpended as ſoon as it receives his command. He that gave the original to nature, can take away the neceſſity of nature: He preſides over creatures, but is not confined to thoſe laws he hath preſcribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own pleaſure. Men dig in the bowels of nature, ſearch into all the treaſures of it, to find medicines to cure a diſeaſe, and after all their attempts it may prove labour in vain: but God, by one act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the

victory of death, and reſcues from the moſt deſperate diſeaſes. All the miracles which were wrought by the apoſtles, either ſpeaking ſome words, or touching with the hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words or in their touches. For ſuch virtue inherent in any created finite ſubject would be created and finite itſelf, and conſequently were incapable to produce effects, which required an infinite virtue, as miracles do which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality reſident in his human nature, but by the ſole power of his divinity. The fleſh could only do what was proper to the fleſh; but the deity did what was proper to the deity. *God alone doth wonders.* Excluding every other cauſe from producing ſuch things. He only doth thoſe things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural cauſes whatſoever. He doth not hereby put his omnipotence to any ſtreſs: it is as eaſy with him to turn nature out of its ſettled courſe, as it was to place it in that ſtation it holds, and appoint it that courſe it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles and teſtimonies of the power of God producing them, and ſuſtaining them: but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unuſual, ſtrike men with a greater admiration upon their appearance, becauſe they are not the products of nature, but the convulſions of it.

The third general thing is, to declare how the power of God appears, in creation, in government, in redemption.

1. In creation.—With what majeſtic lines doth God ſet forth his power, in the giving being, and endowments to all the creatures in the world? All that is in *heaven* and *earth* is his, and ſhews the greatneſs of his *power, glory, victory* and *majeſty.* The heaven being ſo magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, *The firmament of his power*; his power being more conſpicuous and unvailed in that

that glorious arch of the world. Indeed, *God exalts by his power*, that is, exalts himſelf by his power in all the works of his hands; in the ſmalleſt ſhrub, as well as the moſt glorious ſun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we conſider them not, being blinded with too frequent and cuſtomary a ſight of them; yet in the neglect of all the reſt, the view of the heavens doth more affect us with aſtoniſhment at the might of God's arm: theſe declare his glory, and the firmament ſhews his handy-work; and the pſalmiſt peculiarly calls them his heavens, and the work of his fingers: theſe were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

By this creative power God is often diſtinguiſhed from all the idols and falſe gods in the world.—And by this title he ſets forth himſelf when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world. *He is great above all gods, for he hath done whatſoever he pleaſed in heaven and in earth.* Upon this is founded all the worſhip he challengeth in the world, as his peculiar glory. Rev. iv. 11, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou haſt created all things.* And Rev. x. 16, *I have made the earth, and created man upon it.—I, even my hands have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded,* Iſa. xlv. 12. What is the iſſue, ver. 16. *They ſhall be aſhamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols.* And the weakneſs of idols is expreſt by this title, *The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth,* Jer. x. 11. *The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things,* ver. 16.

What is not that God able to do, that hath created ſo great a world? how doth the power of God appear in creation?

In making the world of nothing.—When we ſay, the world was made of nothing, we mean, that there was no matter exiſtent for God to work upon, but what he raiſed himſelf in the firſt act of creation. In this regard, the power of God in creation ſurmounts his power in providence Creation ſuppoſeth nothing, providence ſuppoſeth ſomething in being. Creation intimates a creature making, providence ſpeaks a thing already made, and capable of government, and in government. God uſes ſecond cauſes to bring about his purpoſes.

The world was made of nothing.—The earth which is deſcribed as the firſt matter, without any form or ornament, without any diſtinction or figures, was of God's forming in the bulk, before he did adorn it with his pencil. God in the beginning creating the heaven and the earth, includes two things: Firſt, That thoſe were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things. Secondly, That God begun the creation of the world from thoſe things. Therefore before the heavens and the earth there was nothing abſolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation paſt upon it. It could not be eternal, becauſe nothing can be eternal but God; it muſt therefore have a beginning: if it had a beginning from itſelf, then it was before it was. If it acted in the making itſelf before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing, can act nothing: the action of any thing ſuppoſeth the exiſtence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made then by another, and that maker is God. It is neceſſary that the firſt original of things was from nothing: when we ſee one thing to ariſe from another, we muſt ſuppoſe an original of the firſt of each kind: as when we ſee a tree ſpring up from a ſeed, we know that ſeed came out of the bowels of another

another tree; it had a parent, and it had a matter; we muſt come to ſome firſt, or elſe we run into an endleſs maze: we muſt come to ſome firſt tree, ſome firſt ſeed that had no cauſe of the ſame kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. Creation doth ſuppoſe a production from nothing; becauſe if you ſuppoſe a thing without any real or actual exiſtence, it is not capable of any other production then from nothing: nothing muſt be ſuppoſed before the world, or we muſt ſuppoſe it eternal, and that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God. The creation of ſpiritual ſubſtances, ſuch as angels and ſouls, evince this; thoſe things that are purely ſpiritual, and conſiſt not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they roſe up from nothing. If ſpiritual things aroſe from nothing, much more may corporeal, becauſe they are of a lower nature than ſpiritual. And he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing. As bodily things are more imperfect than ſpiritual, ſo their creation may be ſuppoſed eaſier than that of ſpiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this viſible fabric, as there was to erect ſuch an excellent order as the glorious cherubims.

This creation of things from nothing, ſpeaks an infinite power.—The diſtance between nothing and being, hath been always counted ſo great, that nothing but an infinite power can make ſuch diſtances meet together; either for nothing to paſs into being, or being to return into nothing. To have a thing ariſe from nothing, was ſo difficult a text to thoſe that were ignorant of the ſcripture, that they knew not how to fathom it; and therefore laid it down as a certain rule—That of nothing, nothing is made; which is true of a created power, but not of an uncreated and almighty power. A greater diſtance cannot be imagined than that which

is between nothing and ſomething; that which hath no being, and that which hath: and a greater power cannot be imagined, than that which brings ſomething out of nothing. We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing; but we muſt remain ſwallowed up in admiration of the cauſe that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and meaſures of greatneſs and power. The further any thing is from being, the more immenſe muſt that power be which brings it into being: it is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one, can give being to the ſmalleſt ſpire of graſs. To imagine therefore ſo ſmall a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of duſt to be made of nothing, would ſtupify any creature in the conſideration of it: much more to behold the heavens with all the troop of ſtars, the earth with all its embroidery, and the ſea with all her inhabitants of fiſh; and man, the nobleſt creature of all, to ariſe out of the womb of mere emptineſs. Indeed, God had not acted as an almighty creator if he had ſtood in need of any materials, but of his own framing; it had been as much as his deity was worth, if he had not had, all within the compaſs of his own power, that was neceſſary to operation; if he muſt have been beholden to ſomething without himſelf, and above himſelf, for matter to work upon: had there been ſuch a neceſſity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and conſequently not God.

2. We are to ſhew God's power in the government of the world.—This is evident in the natural, moral and gracious government.

There is a natural providence, which conſiſts in the preſervation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends.

Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men.

Gracious

Gracious government, as reſpecting the church.

1. His power is evident in natural government. In preſervation.—God is the great father of the world, to nouriſh it as well as create it. Man and beaſt would periſh if there were not herbs for their food; and herbs would wither and periſh, if the earth were not watered with fruitful ſhowers. This ſome of the heathens acknowledged, in their worſhipping God under the image of an ox, a uſeful creature, by reaſon of its ſtrength, to which we owe ſo much of our food in corn. Hence God is ſtiled the *preſerver of man and beaſt.* Hence the Jews called God *Place*; becauſe he is the ſubſiſtence of all things. By the ſame word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being to ſuch a term of time As they were created by his word, they are ſupported by his word, Heb. i. 13. The ſame powerful Fiat, *Let the earth bring forth graſs,* when the plants peeped upon man out of nothing, is expreſt every ſpring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The reſurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleaſure of all things to the eye; the watering the vallies from the mountain ſprings; the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth; every draught that the beaſts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the ſuſtenance of man and beaſt, is aſcribed to the *opening of his hand,* the diffuſing of his power, Pſa. civ. 27, &c. as much as the firſt creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature: whence the plants, which are ſo ſerviceable, are called the *Trees of the Lord,* of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himſelf. The whole pſalm is but the deſcription of his preſerving, as the firſt of Geneſis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have ſo many thouſand years remained in the power of underſtanding and willing. By this power things

diſtant in their natures have been joined together, a ſpiritual ſoul and a duſty body knit in a marriage knot. By this power the heavenly bodies have for ſo many ages rolled in their ſpheres, and the tumultuous elements have perſiſted in their order: by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the firſt creation. What an amazing ſight would it be to ſee a man hold a pillar of the Exchange upon one of his fingers! What is this to the power of God, *who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heaven with a ſpan, and weighs the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance?*

The preſerving the earth from the violence of the ſea is a plain inſtance of this power. How is that raging element kept pent within thoſe liſts where he firſt lodged it; continues its courſe in its channel without overflowing the earth, and daſhing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural ſituation of the water is to be above the earth, becauſe it is lighter; and to be immediately under the air, becauſe it is heavier than that thinner element. Who reſtrains this natural quality of it, but that God that firſt formed it? The word of command at firſt, *hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no farther*, keeps thoſe waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be uſeful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its paſſage? How fruitleſs ſometimes is all the art of man to ſend it to its proper channel, when once it had ſpread its mighty waves over ſome countries, and trampled part of the inhabited earth under its feet? it hath triumphed in its victory, and withſtood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that doth bridle it from ſpreading itſelf over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifeſt, he hath ſet but a weak and ſmall bank againſt it. Though he hath bounded it in

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ſome places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in moſt places by feeble ſand. How often is it ſeen in every ſtormy motion, when the waves boil high and roll furiouſly, as if they would ſwallow up all the neighbouring houſes upon the ſhore; when they come to touch thoſe ſandy limits, they bow their heads, fall flat, and ſink into the lap whence they were raiſed; and ſeem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but muſt ſplit themſelves at ſo weak an obſtacle? Can the ſand be thought to be the cauſe of this? the weakneſs of it gives no footing to ſuch a thought. Who can apprehend, that an enraged army ſhould retire upon the oppoſition of a ſtraw in an infant's hand? Is it the nature of the water? Its retirement is againſt the natural quality of it; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always ſee it ſpread itſelf: no cauſe can be rendered in nature; it is a ſtanding monument of the power of God in the preſervation of the world, and ought to be more taken notice of by us in this iſland, ſurrounded with it, than by ſome other countries in the world.

We find nothing hath power to preſerve itſelf.—Doth not every creature upon earth require the aſſiſtance of ſome other for its maintenance? *Can the ruſh grow up without mire; can the flag grow up without water?* Job viii. 11. Can man or beaſt maintain itſelf without grain from the bowels of the earth? Would not every man tumble into the grave, without the aid of other creatures to nouriſh him? Whence do theſe creatures receive that virtue of ſupplying him nouriſhment, but from the ſun and earth; and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things? and ſhould he but ſlack his hand, how ſoon would they and all their qualities periſh, and the links of the world fall in pieces, and daſh one another into their firſt chaos and confuſion? All creatures indeed have an appetite to preſerve themſelves; they have ſome knowledge

knowledge of the outward means for their preſervation; ſo have irrational animals a natural inſtinct, as well as men have ſome ſkill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful: but what thing in the world can preſerve itſelf by an inward influx into its own being? all things want ſuch a power without God's Fiat, *Let it be ſo*: Nothing but is deſtitute of ſuch a power for its own preſervation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were there any true power for ſuch a work, what need of ſo many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preſerved by them?

It appears in propagation.—That powerful word, *Increaſe and multiply*, pronounced at the firſt creation, hath ſpread itſelf over every part of the world; every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individuals and ſingle creatures have been multiplied, to cover the face of the earth in their continued ſucceſſions? What a world of plants ſpring up from the womb of a dry earth, moiſtened by the influence of a cloud, and hatched by the beams of the ſun? How admirable an inſtance of his propagating power is it, that from a little ſeed, a maſſy root ſhould ſtrike into the bowels of the earth; a tall body and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colours, ſhould break through the ſurface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the ſeed you neither ſmell the ſcent, nor ſee any firmneſs of a tree, nor behold any of thoſe colours which you view in the flowers that the years produce? A power not to be imitated by any creature. How aſtoniſhing is it, that a ſmall ſeed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, ſhould ſpread itſelf into leaves, bark, fruit of a vaſt weight, and multiply itſelf into millions of ſeeds? what power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families,

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ſtocked the world with people? Conſider the living creatures, as formed in the womb, of their ſeveral kinds; every one is a wonder of power. The pſalmiſt inſtanceth in the forming and propagation of man. Pſa. cxxxix. 14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are thy works.* The forming of the parts diſtinctly in the womb, the bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That ſo fine a ſtructure as the body of man ſhould be poliſhed in *the lower parts of the earth*, as he calls the *womb*, ver. 15. in ſo ſhort a time, with members of various form and uſefulneſs, each labouring in their ſeveral functions. Can any man give an exact account of the manner, how the bones do grow in the womb: it is unknown to the father, and no leſs hid from the mother, and the wiſeſt men cannot ſearch out the depths of it. It is one of the ſecret works of an omnipotent power, ſecret in the manner, though open in the effect. So that we muſt aſcribe it to God, as Job doth, *Thine hands have made me and faſhioned me together round about.* Thy hands which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. The heavens are ſaid to be the work of God's hands, and man is here ſaid to be no leſs. The forming and propagating of man from that earthly matter, is no leſs a wonder of power, than the ſtructure of the world from a rude and indiſpoſed matter. A heathen philoſopher deſcants elegantly upon it: "Doſt thou underſtand (my ſon) the forming of man in the womb; who erected that noble fabric; who carved the eyes, the cryſtal windows of light, and the conductors of the body; who bored the noſtrils and ears, thoſe loop holes of ſcents and ſounds; who ſtretched out and knit the ſinews and ligaments for the faſtening of every member; who caſt the hollow veins, the chamels of blood; ſet and ſtrengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of

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the body; who digged the pores, the ſinks to expel the filth; who made the heart, the repoſitory of the ſoul, and formed the lungs like a pipe? What mother, what father wrought theſe things? no, none but the Almighty God, who made all things according to his pleaſure; it is he who propagates this noble piece from a pile of duſt. Who is born by his own advice; who gives ſtature, features, ſenſe, wit, ſtrength, ſpeech, but God?"

It is no leſs a wonder, that a little infant can live ſo long in a dark ſink, in the midſt of filth, without breathing: and the eduction of it out of the womb is no leſs a wonder, than the forming, increaſe, nouriſhment of it in that cell. A wonder, that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little creature, when it ſprings up from ſuch ſmall beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have a dominion over the creatures, and propagates its kind in the ſame manner: all this is unaccountable without having recourſe to the power of God in the government of the creatures.

2. This power is evident in moral government. In the reſtraint of the malicious nature of the devil. —Since ſatan hath the power of an angel, and the malice of a devil, what ſafety would there be for our perſons from deſtruction, what ſecurity for our goods from rifling, by this inviſible, potent, and envious ſpirit, if his power were not reſtrained and his malice curbed, by one more mighty than himſelf? How much doth he envy God, the glory of his creation; and man, the uſe and benefit of it? How deſirous would he be in regard of his paſſion, how able in regard of his ſtrength and ſubtilty, to overthrow or infect all worſhip, but what was directed to himſelf; to manage all things according to his luſts, turn all things topſy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houſes, plunder us of the ſupports of nature, waſte kingdoms,

kingdoms, &c. if he were not held in a chain, as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horſe, by the Creator and Governor of the world? What remedy could be uſed by man againſt the activity of this unſeen and ſwift ſpirit? The world could not ſubſiſt under his malice; he would practiſe the ſame things upon all, as he did upon Job, when he had got leave from his governor; turn the ſwords of men into one another's bowels; ſend fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth and cattle, intended for the uſe of man; raiſe winds to ſhake and tear our houſes upon our heads; daub our bodies with ſcabs and boils, and let all the humours in our blood looſe upon us. He that envied Adam a paradiſe, doth envy us the pleaſure of enjoying its out-works: if we were not deſtroyed by him, we ſhould live in a continued vexation by ſpectrums and apparitions, affrightening ſounds and noiſe; as ſome think the Egyptians did in that three days darkneſs: he would be always winnowing us, as he deſired to winnow Peter. But God over-maſters his ſtrength, that he cannot move a hair's breadth beyond his tedder; not only he is unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarenes forbidden and filthy ſwine without ſpecial licence. When he is caſt out of one place, he walks through dry places ſeeking reſt, new objects for his malicious deſigns, but finding none, till God lets looſe the reins upon him for a new employment. Though Satan's power be great, yet God ſuffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as divine wiſdom thinks fit: and the divine power tempers the other's active malice, and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended ſpoil and captivity. How much ſtronger is God, than all the legions of hell; as he that holds a ſtrong man from effecting his purpoſe, teſtifies more ability than his adverſary? How doth he lock him up for a thouſand years in a pound,

which

which he cannot leap over? and this reſtraint is wrought partly by blinding the devil in his deſigns, partly by denying him concourſe to his motion: as he hindered the active quality of the fire upon the three children, by withdrawing his power, which was neceſſary to the motion of it; and his power is as neceſſary for the motion of the devil, as for that of any other creature. Sometimes he makes him to confeſs him againſt his own intereſt, as Apollo's oracle confeſt. And though when the devil was caſt out of the poſſeſſed perſon, he publickly owned Chriſt to be the *holy one of God*, Mark i. 24. to render him ſuſpected by the people of having commerce with the unclean ſpirits; yet this he could not do without the leave and permiſſion of God, that the power of Chriſt in ſtopping his mouth and impoſing ſilence upon him might be evidenced; and that it reaches to the gates of hell, as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the ſtrength, as well as the wiſdom of God, that *the deceived and deceiver are his.* Wiſdom to defeat, and power to over-rule his moſt malicious deſigns to his own glory.

In the reſtraint of the natural corruption of men. —Since the impetus of original corruption runs in the blood, conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his poſterity, and univerſally diffuſed in all mankind; what wrack and havoc would it make in the world, if it were not ſuppreſſed by this divine power, which preſides over the hearts of men? Man is ſo wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man drinks iniquity like water, being by nature abominable and filthy. He greedily ſwallows all matter for iniquity; every thing ſuitable to the mire and poiſon in his nature, and would ſprout it out with all fierceneſs and inſolence. God himſelf gives us the deſcription of man's nature, Gen. vi. 5. that he hath not one good *imagination at any time.*

And

And the apoſtle from the pſalmiſt dilates and comments upon it: *There is none righteous, no not one; their mouth is full of curſing and bitterneſs, their feet are ſwift to ſhed blood, &c.* This corruption is equal in all, natural to all; it is not more poiſonous or more fierce in one man, than in another. The root of all men is the ſame; all the branches therefore do equally poſſeſs the villanous nature of the root. No child of Adam can by natural deſcent be better than Adam, or have leſs of baſeneſs and vileneſs, and venom than Adam. How fruitful would this loathſome lake be in all kinds of ſteams? What unbridled licentiouſneſs and head-ſtrong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpoſe itſelf to lock down the flood-gates of it? What rooting up of human ſociety would there be; how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater, than that of apprehenders and puniſhers? How would the prints of natural laws be raſed out of the heart, if God ſhould leave human nature to itſelf? Who can read the firſt chapter to the Romans, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 verſes, without acknowledging this truth, where there is a a catalogue of thoſe villanies which followed upon God's pulling up the ſluices, and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural courſe? If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be over-run, his vine rooted up; the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worſt of wickedneſs. How great is that power, that curbs, bridles, or changes, as many head-ſtrong horſes, at once and every minute, as there are ſons of Adam upon the earth? The *floods lift up their waves; the Lord on high is mightier than the noiſe of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the ſea*; that doth huſh and pen in the turbulent paſſions of men.

In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to his own ends. That muſt be an omnipotent hand

hand that graſps and contains the hearts of all men; the heart of the meaneſt perſon, as well as of the moſt towering angel, and turns them as he pleaſes, and makes them ſometimes ignorantly, ſometimes knowingly concur to the accompliſhment of his own purpoſes: when the hearts of men are ſo numerous, their thoughts ſo various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to thoſe millions of hearts, and with infinite power guided by as infinite wiſdom, he draws them into what channels he pleaſes for the gaining of his own ends. Though the Jews had imbrued their hands in the blood of our Saviour, and their rage was yet reeking-hot againſt his followers, God bridled their fury in the church's infancy, till it had got ſome ſtrength, and caſt a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apoſtles, Acts ii. 45. *And fear came upon every ſoul, and many wonders and ſigns were done by the apoſtles.* Was there not the ſame reaſon in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought, to point them to the finger of God and calm their rage? Yet did not the power of God work upon their paſſions in thoſe miracles, nor ſtop the impetuouſneſs of the corruption reſident in their hearts. Yet now thoſe who had the boldneſs to attack the Son of God, and nail him to the croſs, are frighted at the appearance of twelve unarmed apoſtles; as the ſea ſeems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble ſand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Iſraelites, and turn them to that point, as to lend their moſt coſtly veſſels, their precious jewels, and rich garments, to ſupply thoſe whom they had juſt before tyrannically loaded with their chains? When a great part of an army came upon Jehoſaphat to diſpatch him into another world, how doth God in a trice touch their hearts, and move them by a ſecret inſtinct at once to depart from him? As if you ſhould ſee a numerous flight of birds in a moment

ment turn wing another way, by a ſudden and joint conſent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a ſpirit fit for government, and gave him another heart; and brought the people to ſubmit to his yoke, who a little before wandered about the land upon no nobler employment than the ſeeking of aſſes. It is no ſmall remark of the power of God, to make a number of ſtrong and diſcontented perſons, and deſirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke of government, and ſubmit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and unwiſer than the moſt of them; and many times, an oppreſſor and invader of their rights. Upon this account, David calls God his *fortreſs, tower,* and *ſhield*; all terms of ſtrength in ſubduing the people under him. It is the mighty hand of God, that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The ſame hand that aſſuageth the waves of the ſea, ſuppreſſeth the tumults of the people.

3. It appears in his gracious and judicial government.

In his gracious government.—In the deliverance of his church: he is the ſtrength of Iſrael, and hath protected his little flock in the midſt of wolves; and maintained their ſtanding, when the ſtrongeſt kingdoms have ſunk, and the beſt jointed ſtates have been broken in pieces. When judgments have ravaged countries, and torn up the mighty, as a tempeſtuous wind hath often done the talleſt trees, which ſeem to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the ſtorm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and roſe buſhes have ſtood firm, and been ſeen in their beauty next morning. The ſtate of the church hath outlived the moſt flouriſhing monarchies; when there hath been a mighty knot of adverſaries againſt her; when the bulls of Baſhan have puſhed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have ſharpened their weapons, and edged their

malice; when the voice was ſtrong, and the hopes high to raſe her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the ſtrength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been paſt againſt her, and the powers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and ſkulked in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to aſſiſt, help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated, kings have brought gifts to her and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unſeen power, have been forced to court her, whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have ſneaked into their den, and the church hath triumphed when ſhe hath been upon the brink of the grave. Thus did God ſend a mighty angel to be the executioner of Senacherib's army, and the protector of Jeruſalem, who run his ſword into the hearts of eighty thouſand when they were ready to ſwallow up his beloved city.

When the knife was at the throats of the Jews in Shuſhan, by a powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies. With what an outſtretched arm were the Iſraelites freed from the Egyptian yoke? When Pharaoh had muſtered a great army to purſue them, aſſiſted with ſix hundred chariots of war, the Red Sea obſtructed their paſſage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Iſraelites deſpaired of deliverance, and the inſolent Egyptian aſſured himſelf of his revenge; God ſtretches out his irreſiſtible arm, to defeat the enemy and aſſiſt his people; he ſtrikes down the wolves, and preſerves the flock. God reſtrained the Egyptian enmity againſt the Iſraelites till they were at the brink of the Red Sea, and then lets them follow their humour and purſue their fugitives, that his power might more glorioufly

ſhine

ſhine forth in the deliverance of the one, and the deſtruction of the other. God might have brought Iſrael out of Egypt in the time of thoſe kings, that had remembered the good ſervice of Joſeph to their country; but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, ſuffers them to be ſlaves, that they might by his ſole power be conquerors; which had had no appearance, had there been a willing diſmiſſion of them at the firſt ſummons. Exod. ix. 16. *In very deed, for this cauſe have I raiſed thee up, for to ſhew my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* I have permitted thee to riſe up againſt my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mighteſt be an occaſion for the manifeſtation of my power in their reſcue; and whilſt thou art obſtinate to enſlave them, I will ſtretch out my arm to deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the wreck of thee and thy hoſt in the Red Sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age or in one part of the world, but God hath ſignalized his power in all kingdoms where ſhe hath had a footing: as he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated her by one ſpirit; ſo he hath protected her by the ſame arm of power.

When the Roman emperors bandied all their force againſt her for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end, than when they firſt attempted it: the church grew under their ſword, and was hatched under the wings of the Roman eagle, which were ſpread to deſtroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge; and the waters the devil poured out to drown her, did but ſlime the earth for a new increaſe of her. She hath ſometimes been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath ſeemed to lie in the grave for ſome days, that the power of God might be more viſible in her ſudden reſurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her perſecutors.

In his judicial proceedings.—The deluge was no ſmall teſtimony of his power, in opening the ciſterns of heaven, and pulling up the ſluices of the ſea. He doth but call for the *waters of the ſea, and they pour themſelves upon the face of the earth*, Amos ix. 6. In forty days the waters over-topt the higheſt mountains fifteen cubits; and by the ſame power he afterwards reduced the ſea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into his den. A ſhower of fire from heaven upon Sodom and the cities of the plain, was a ſignal diſplay of his power, either in creating it on the ſudden for the execution of his righteous ſentence, or ſending the element of fire, contrary to its nature (which affects aſcent) for the puniſhment of rebels againſt the light of nature.

How often hath he ruined the moſt flouriſhing monarchies, led princes away ſpoiled, and overthrown the mighty? Which Job makes an argument of his ſtrength, Job xii. 13, 14. Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals, broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to ſucceed in ſuch an attempt, unleſs God had given them ſtrength and motion, for the executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath.

How did he evidence his power, by daubing the throne of Pharaoh, and his chamber of preſence, as well as the houſes of his ſubjects, with the ſlime of frogs; turning their waters into blood, and their duſt into biting lice; raiſing his militia of locuſt againſt them; cauſing a three days darkneſs without ſtopping the motion of the ſun: taking off their firſt-born, the excellency of their ſtrength, in a night, by the ſtroke of the angel's ſword? He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharoah, and preſents him with a deſtruction, where he expected a victory: brings thoſe waves over the heads of him and his hoſt which ſtood firm as marble walls for the ſafety of his people: the ſea is made to ſwallow them up, that

that durſt not by the order of their governor touch the Iſraelites. It only ſprinkled the one as a type of baptiſm, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the inſtrument of an offenſive and defenſive war. *He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity.* Great monarchs have by his power been hurled from their thrones, and their ſceptres (like Venice-glaſſes) broken before their faces, and they been advanced, that have had the leaſt hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and ſet a ſhrub to grow up in the place; diſſolved rocks, and eſtabliſhed bubbles. Luke i. 52, *He hath ſhewed ſtrength with his arm, he hath ſcattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts: he hath put down the mighty from their ſeat, and exalted them of low degree.*

3. The power of God appears in redemption.—As our Saviour is called the *wiſdom of God,* ſo he is called the *power of God.* The arm of power was lifted up as high, as the deſigns of wiſdom were laid deep: as this way of redemption could not be contrived, but by an infinite wiſdom; ſo it could not be accompliſhed but by an infinite power. None but God could ſhape ſuch a deſign, and none but God could effect it. The divine power in temporal deliverances, and freedom from the ſlavery of human oppreſſors, vails to that which glitters in redemption; whereby the devil is defeated in his deſigns, ſtript of his ſpoils, and yoked in his ſtrength. The power of God in creation requires not thoſe degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, ſo there was nothing to oppoſe; no victorious devil was in that to be ſubdued, no thundering law to be ſilenced, no death to be conquered, no tranſgreſſion to be pardoned and rooted out, no hell to be ſhut, no ignominious death upon the

croſs to be ſuffered. It had been in the nature of the thing, an eaſier thing to divine power to have created a new world, than repaired a broken, and purified a polluted one. This is the moſt admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the firſt creation.

And this will appear, 1. In the perſon redeeming. 2. In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. 3. In the application of redemption.

1. In the perſon redeeming.—In his conception. —*He was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt in the womb of the virgin.* Luke i. 35. *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee.* Which act is expreſt to be the effect of the infinite power of God; and it expreſſes the ſupernatural manner of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and ſignifies not the divine nature of Chriſt infuſing itſelf into the womb of the virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghoſt in the producing the human nature of Chriſt, and not to the nature aſſuming that humanity into union with itſelf. The Holy Ghoſt, or the third perſon in the trinity, overſhadowed the virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Chriſt, and united it to the divinity. It is therefore expreſt by a word of the ſame import with that uſed Gen. i. 2. *The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters,* which ſignifies, as it were, a brooding upon the chaos, ſhadowing it with his wings, as hens ſit upon their eggs, to form them and hatch them into animals; or elſe it is an alluſion to the *cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* It was not ſuch a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, ſuch as God's bringing things into form out of the firſt matter, which had

had nothing but an obediential or paſſive diſpoſition to whatſoever ſtamp the powerful wiſdom of God ſhould imprint upon it. So the ſubſtance of the virgin had no active, but only a paſſive diſpoſition to this work: the matter of the body was earthly, the ſubſtance of the virgin; the forming of it was heavenly, the Holy Ghoſt working upon that matter. And therefore when it is ſaid, that *ſhe was found with child of the Holy Ghoſt*, it is to be underſtood of the efficacy of the Holy Ghoſt, not of the ſubſtance of the Holy Ghoſt. The matter was natural, but the manner of conceiving was in a ſupernatural way, above the methods of nature. In reference to the active principle, the Redeemer is called in the prophecy, *the Branch of the Lord*, in regard of the divine hand that planted him: in reſpect to the paſſive principle, *the fruit of the earth*, in regard of the womb that bare him; and therefore ſaid to be *made of a woman*. That part of the fleſh of the virgin whereof the human nature of Chriſt was made, was refined and purified from corruption by the overſhadowing of the Holy Ghoſt, as a ſkilful workman ſeparates the droſs from the gold: our Saviour is therefore called *that holy thing*, though born of the virgin: he was neceſſarily ſome way to deſcend from Adam. God indeed might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it (as he did Adam's) out of the duſt of the ground: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam; though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us, becauſe it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore neceſſary to an affinity with us, not only that he ſhould have the ſame human nature, but that it ſhould flow from the ſame principle, and be propagated to him. But now, by this way of producing the humanity of Chriſt of the ſubſtance of the virgin, he was in Adam (ſay ſome) corporally,

but not ſeminally; of the ſubſtance of Adam, or a daughter of Adam, but not of the ſeed of Adam: and ſo he is of the ſame nature that had ſinned, and ſo what he did and ſuffered may be imputed to us; which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

It was not convenient he ſhould be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother: for whoſoever is ſo born is polluted: *A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean:* and our Saviour had been incapable of being a Redeemer, had he been tainted with the leaſt ſpot of our nature, but would have ſtood in need of redemption himſelf. Beſides, it had been inconſiſtent with the holineſs of the divine nature, to have aſſumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of bleſſedneſs to all nations, was not to be ſubject to the curſe of the law for himſelf; which he would have been, had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn the devil's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature under the curſe; nor could he be able to break the ſerpent's head, had he been tainted with the ſerpent's breath.

Again, ſuppoſing that Almighty God by his divine power had ſo ordered the matter, and ſo perfectly ſanctified an earthly father and mother from all original ſpot, that the human nature might have been tranſmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghoſt did purge that part of the fleſh of the virgin of which the body of Chriſt was made; yet it was not convenient that the perſon, that was *God bleſſed for ever* as well as man, partaking of our nature, ſhould have a conception in the ſame manner as ours, but different, and in ſome meaſure conformable to the infinite dignity of his perſon; which could not have been, had not a ſupernatural power and a divine perſon been concerned as an active principle. Beſides, ſuch a birth had not been

been agreeable to the firſt promiſe, which calls him *The ſeed of the woman,* not of the man; and ſo the veracity of God had ſuffered ſome detriment: the ſeed of the woman only, is ſet in oppoſition to the ſeed of the ſerpent.

By this manner of conception, the holineſs of his nature is ſecured, and his fitneſs for his office is aſſured to us. It is now a pure and unpolluted humanity that is the temple and tabernacle of the divinity: the fulneſs of the godhead dwells in him bodily, and dwells in him holily. His humanity is ſupernaturalized, and elevated by the activity of the Holy Ghoſt, hatching the fleſh of the virgin into man, as the chaos into a world. Though we read of ſome ſanctified from the womb, it was not a pure and perfect holineſs; it was like the light of fire mixed with ſmoke, an infuſed holineſs accompanied with a natural taint: but the holineſs of the Redeemer by this conception, is like the light of the ſun, pure and without ſpot. The Spirit of Holineſs ſupplying the place of a father in a way of creation.

His fitneſs for his office is alſo aſſured to us; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit, a divine perſon, the guilt of our ſins may be imputed to him becauſe of our nature, without the ſtain of ſin inherent in him; becauſe of his ſupernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curſe without being touched by our taint. By this means our ſinful nature is aſſumed without ſin in that nature which was aſſumed by him; fleſh he hath, but not *ſinful fleſh*, Rom. viii. 3. Real fleſh, but not really ſinful, only by way of imputation.

Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work: by the ordinary laws and courſe of nature a virgin could not bear a ſon; nothing but a ſupernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make ſo holy and perfect a conjunction. The generation of others, in an ordinary way, is by male

male and female: but the virgin is overſhadowed by the Spirit and Power of the Higheſt. Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing the Son of God. In other generations, a rational ſoul is only united to a material body: but in this, the divine nature is united with the human in one perſon by an indiſſoluble union.

The ſecond act of power in the perſon redeeming, is the union of the two natures, the divine and human. The deſigning of this was an act of wiſdom; but the accompliſhing it was an act of power.*

2. This power appears in the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

The divine power will appear, if you conſider, 1. The nature of the doctrine. 2. The inſtruments employed in it. 3. The means they uſed to propagate it. 4. The ſucceſs they had.

1. The nature of the doctrine.—This doctrine ſtruck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their anceſtors, confirmed by the cuſtomary obſervance of many ages, rooted in their minds and eſtabliſhed by their laws. Acts xviii. 13, *This fellow perſuadeth us to worſhip God contrary to the law*, againſt cuſtoms, to which they aſcribed the happineſs of their ſtates, and the proſperity of the people; and would put in the place of this religion they would aboliſh, a new one inſtituted by a man whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a croſs, as an impoſtor, blaſphemer, and ſeditious perſon.

It was a doctrine that would change the cuſtoms of the Jews, who were intruſted with the oracles of God. It would bury for ever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moſes from that God, who had

* See more on the Perſon of Chriſt in the preceding diſcourſe on Wiſdom.

had with a mighty hand brought them out of Egypt, conſecrated their law with thunders and lightnings from Mount Sinai, at the time of its publication, backed it with ſevere ſanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderneſs and their Canaan, and had continued it for ſo many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments ſent upon them when they neglected and ſlighted it; and with what great ſucceſs they were followed when they valued and obſerved it; and how they had abhorred the author of this new religion, who had ſpoken ſlightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an eaſy matter to divorce them from that worſhip, upon which were entailed (as they imagined) their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the deareſt regard with mankind? the Jews were no leſs devoted to their ceremonial traditions, than the Heathen were to their vain ſuperſtitions.

This doctrine of the goſpel was of that nature, that the ſtate of religion all over the earth muſt be overturned by it; the wiſdom of the Greeks muſt vail to it, the idolatry of the people muſt ſtoop to it, and the profane cuſtoms of men muſt moulder under the weight of it. Was it an eaſy matter for the pride of nature to deny a cuſtomary wiſdom, to entertain a new doctrine againſt the authority of their anceſtors; to inſcribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the reſt of the world? Nothing can be of greater eſteem with men, than the credit of their law-givers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and proſperity of themſelves; hence the minds of men were ſharpened againſt it. The Greeks, the wiſeſt nation, ſlighted it as fooliſh; the Jews, the religious nation, ſtumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of ancient prophecies and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmeſt eye may behold the difficulty

difficulty to change cuſtom, a ſecond nature: it is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, ſtop the courſe of the ſun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the colour of Europe. Cuſtom dips men in as durable a dye as nature; the difficulties of carrying it on againſt the divine religion of the Jew, and rooted cuſtoms of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an almighty power: and in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

2. Divine power appeared in the inſtruments employed for the publiſhing and propagating the goſpel, who were

Mean and worthleſs in themſelves.—Not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred: ſo far from any ſplendid eſtates, that they poſſeſſed nothing but their nets; without any credit and reputation in the world; without comelineſs and ſtrength; as unfit to ſubdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war. Not learned doctors, bred up at the feet of the famous rabbins at Jeruſalem, whom Paul calls *the princes of the world*; nor nurſed up in the ſchool of Athens, under the philoſophers and orators of the time: not the wiſe men of Greece, but the fiſhermen of Galilee; naturally ſkilled in no language but their own, and no more exact in that than thoſe of the ſame condition in any other nation: ignorant of every thing but the language of their lakes and their fiſhing trade; except Paul, called ſome time after the reſt to that employment: and after the deſcent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in every thing but the doctrine they were commanded to publiſh; for the council before whom they were ſummoned, proved them to be ſo, which increaſed their wonder at them, Acts iv. 13. Had it been publiſhed by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, ſhould conquer

conquer the world to the croſs, it might have been thought an illuſion againſt all the reaſon of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accompliſhed by them. They publiſhed this doctrine in Jeruſalem, and quickly ſpread it over the greateſt part of the world. Folly outwitted wiſdom, and weakneſs over-powered ſtrength. The conqueſt of the eaſt by Alexander, was not ſo admirable as the enterpriſe of theſe poor men. He attempted his conqueſt with the hands of a warlike nation, though indeed but a ſmall number of thirty thouſand againſt multitudes, many hundred thouſands of the enemies; yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to ſlaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuouſneſs. Beſides, he was bred up to ſuch enterpriſes, had a learned education under the beſt philoſopher, and a military education under the beſt commander, and a natural courage to animate him. Theſe inſtruments had no ſuch advantage from nature; the heavenly treaſure was placed in thoſe earthen veſſels, as Gideon's lamps in empty pitchers, Judg. vii. 16. that *the excellency*, or hyperbole, *of the power might be of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 7. and the ſtrength of his arm be diſplayed in the infirmity of the inſtruments. They were deſtitute of earthly wiſdom, and therefore deſpiſed by the Jews, and derided by the Gentiles; the publiſhers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been vailed under the gifts of the creature.

3. The divine power appears in the means whereby it was propagated.—By means different from the methods of the world: not by force of arms, as ſome religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horſe hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an alcoran in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apoſtles bore not this doctrine through the world upon

upon the points of their ſwords; they preſented bodily death where they would beſtow an immorta life: they employed not troops of men in a warlike poſture, which had been poſſible for them after the goſpel was once ſpread; they had no ambition to ſubdue men unto themſelves, but to God; they coveted not the poſſeſſions of others; deſigned not to enrich themſelves; invaded not the rights of princes, nor the liberties and properties of the people: they rifled them not of their eſtates, nor ſcared them into this religion by a fear of loſing their wordly happineſs. The arguments they uſed would naturally drive them from an entertainment of this doctrine, rather than allure them to be proſelites to it: their deſign was to change their hearts, not their government; to wean them from the love of the world, to a love of a Redeemer; to remove that which would ruin their ſouls. It was not to enſlave them, but ranſom them; they had a *warfare*, but not with *carnal weapons*, but ſuch as were *mighty through God for the pulling down of ſtrong holds*, 2 Cor. x. 4. they uſed no weapons but the doctrine they preached. Others that have not gained conqueſts by the edge of the ſword and the ſtratagems of war, have extended their opinions to others by the ſtrength of human reaſon, and the inſinuations of eloquence. But the apoſtles had as little flouriſh in their tongues as edge upon their ſwords: their preaching was *not with the enticing words of man's wiſdom*; their preſence was mean, and their diſcourſes without varniſh; their doctrine was plain, a *crucified Chriſt*; a doctrine unlaced, ungarniſhed, untoothſome to the world; but they had the demonſtration of the Spirit, and a mighty power for their companion in the work. The doctrine they preached, viz. the death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of Chriſt, are called *the powers*, not of this world, but *of the world to come*. No leſs than a ſupernatural power could conduct them in this

this attempt, with ſuch weak methods in human appearance.

4. The divine power was conſpicuous in the great ſucceſs it had under all theſe difficulties—Multitudes were propheſied of to embrace it; whence the prophet Iſaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Chriſt, Iſa. v. 3. calls upon the church to enlarge her tents, and *lengthen out her cords* to receive thoſe multitudes of children that ſhould call her mother. Iſa. liv. 2, 3, for ſhe ſhould *break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her ſeed ſhould inherit the gentiles:* the idolaters and perſecutors ſhould liſt their names in the muſter roll of the church.

Preſently after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt from heaven upon the apoſtles, you find the hearts of three thouſand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine; who were a little before ſo far from having a favourable thought of it, that ſome of them at leaſt, if not all, had expreſt their rage againſt it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the author of it: but in a moment they were ſo altered, that they breathe out affections inſtead of fury; neither the reſpect they had to their rulers, nor the honour they bore to their prieſts; not the deriſions of the people, nor the threatening of puniſhment, could ſtop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of diſcouragements. How wonderful is it that they ſhould ſo ſoon, and by ſuch ſmall means, pay a reverence to the ſervants, who had none for the maſter? that they ſhould hear him with patience, without the ſame clamor againſt them as againſt Chriſt, crucify them, crucify them? But, that their hearts ſhould ſo ſuddenly be enflamed with devotion to him dead, whom they ſo much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the moſt famous cities; in Jeruſalem, where Chriſt had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of chriſtians firſt began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Epheſus,

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the ſeat of a noted idol. In leſs than twenty years there was never a province of the Roman empire, and ſcarce any part of the known world but was ſtored with the profeſſors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them ſprinkled in every corner, whoſe *faith was ſpoken of throughout the world.* The court of Nero, that monſter of mankind, and the moſt cruel and ſordid tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of ſincere votaries to it; there were ſaints in Cæſar's houſe, while Paul was under Nero's chain: and it maintained its ſtanding, and flouriſhed in ſpite of all the force of hell 250 years before any ſovereign prince eſpouſed it.

The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and ſubdued their bodies; theſe vanquiſhed hearts and wills, and brought the moſt beloved thoughts under the yoke of Chriſt: ſo much did this doctrine overmaſter the conſciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke, than others at their liberty; and counted it more a glory to die for the honour of it, than to live in the profeſſion of it. Thus did our Saviour reign and gather ſubjects in the midſt of his enemies; in which reſpect, in the firſt diſcovery of the goſpel, he is deſcribed as *a mighty conqueror,* Rev. vi. 2. and ſtill conquering in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

How great a teſtimony of his power is it, that from ſo ſmall a cloud ſhould riſe ſo glorious a ſun, that ſhould chaſe before it the darkneſs and power of hell; triumph over the idolatry, ſuperſtition, and prophaneneſs of the world? This plain doctrine vanquiſhed the obſtinacy of the Jews, baffled the underſtanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, threw the devil not only out of bodies, but hearts; tore up the foundation of his empire, and planted the croſs where the devil had for many ages before eſtabliſhed his ſtandard. How much more than a human force is illuſtrious in this whole conduct?

conduct? nothing in any age of the world can parallel it; it being ſo much againſt the methods of nature, the diſpoſition of the world, and conſidering the reſiſtance againſt it, ſeems to ſurmount even the work of creation. Never were there in any profeſſion ſuch multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of ſobriety, acuteneſs and wiſdom, that expoſed themſelves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the moſt terrifying ſhapes for the honour of this doctrine.

To conclude, this ſhould be often meditated upon to form our underſtandings to a full aſſent to the goſpel, and the truth of it; the want of which conſideration of power, and the cuſtomarineſs of an education in the outward profeſſion of it, is the ground of all the prophaneneſs under it and apoſtacy from it; the diſeſteem of the truth it declares and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a proſpect and ſenſe of the impreſſions of divine power in it, the more we ſhall have a reverence of the divine precepts.

The third thing is, the power of God appears in the application of redemption, as well as in the perſon redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

In the planting grace.—In the pardon of ſin.—In the preſerving grace.

Fourthly, The Uſe.

A conſideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort.—As omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed; ſo the comforts from it are ſtreams that cannot be exhauſted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himſelf folded in the arms of omnipotence?

This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; *I am the Lord your God*; therefore that power, which is as eſſential to the godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is in the rights and extent of it aſſured

unto you. Nay, may we not ſay, it is made over more than any other, becauſe it is that which animates every other perfection, and is the ſpirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world? If God had expreſt himſelf in particular, as, I am a true God, a wiſe God, a loving God, a righteous God, I am yours; what would all or any of thoſe have ſignified, unleſs the other alſo had been implied, as, I am an almighty God, I am your God? In God's making over himſelf in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which all his other grants would be inſignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hand of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never uſe his power to injure his confiding creature: if it were in our own hands, we might uſe it to injure ourſelves. It is a power in the hand of an indulgent father, not a hard hearted tyrant: It is a juſt power, *his right hand is full of righteouſneſs*, Pſa. xlviii. 10. becauſe of his righteouſneſs he can never uſe it ill, and becauſe of his wiſdom he can never uſe it unſeaſonably. Men that have ſtrength, often miſplace the actings of it, becauſe of their folly; and ſometimes employ it to baſe ends, becauſe of their wickedneſs: but this power in God is always awakened by goodneſs and conducted by wiſdom; it is never exerciſed by ſelf-will and paſſion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteouſneſs. How comfortable is it to think, that you have a God that can do what he pleaſes; nothing ſo difficult but he can effect, nothing ſo ſtrong but he can over-rule? You need not dread men, ſince you have one to reſtrain them: nor fear devils, ſince you have one to chain them: no creature but is acted by this power; no creature but muſt fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation: it is not weakened by his preſervation of things; he yet hath a fulneſs of power, and a reſidue of ſpirit.

God's Holineſs.

Exodus xv. 11.

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE, O LORD, AMONG THE GODS? WHO IS LIKE THEE, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS, FEARFUL IN PRAISES, DOING WONDERS?

THIS verſe is one of the loftieſt deſcriptions of the majeſty and excellency of God in the whole ſcripture. It is a part of Moſes's triumphant ſong, after a great and real, and a typical victory; in the womb of which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the firſt ſong upon holy record, and it conſiſts of gratulatory and prophetic matter: it caſts a look backward, to what God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and a look forward, to what God ſhall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of ſomething more excellent to be wrought towards the cloſing up of the world; when his plague ſhall be poured out upon the antichriſtian powers, which ſhould revive the ſame ſong of Moſes in the church, as fitted ſo many ages before for ſuch a ſcene of affairs. It is obſerved, that many words in this ſong are put in the future tenſe, noting a time to come; and the very firſt word, ver. 1. *Then ſang Moſes and the children of Iſrael this ſong*; implying that it was compoſed and calculated for the celebrating ſome greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world.

Upon this account, ſome of the Jewiſh rabbins, from the conſideration of this remark, aſſerted the doctrine of the reſurrection to be meant in this place; that Moſes and thoſe Iſraelites ſhould riſe again to ſing the ſame ſong, for ſome greater miracles God ſhould work, and greater triumphs he ſhould bring forth, exceeding thoſe wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

But the expreſſion I pitch upon in the text to handle, is *glorious in holineſs.* He is magnified or honourable in holineſs; ſo the ſame word is tranſlated, Iſa. xlii. 21. *He will magnify the law and make it honourable.* Thy holineſs hath ſhone forth admirably in this laſt exploit, againſt the enemies and oppreſſors of thy people. The holineſs of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches: holineſs is his crown, and his mercy is his treaſure. This is the bleſſedneſs and nobleneſs of his nature; it renders him glorious in himſelf and glorious to his creatures, that underſtand any thing of this lovely perfection.

Holineſs is a glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God.—Hence he is in ſcripture ſtiled *the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Iſrael*; and oftener entitled Holy, than Almighty, and ſet forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other: you never find it expreſſed, his Mighty Name, or his Wiſe Name; but his Great Name, and moſt of all, his Holy Name. This is his greateſt title of honour, in this doth the majeſty and venerableneſs of his name appear. When the ſinfulneſs of Senacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghoſt takes the riſe from this attribute, 2 Kings xix. 22, *Thou haſt lifted up thine eyes on high, even againſt the Holy One of Iſrael*; not againſt the wiſe, mighty, &c. but againſt *the Holy One of Iſrael*, as that wherein the majeſty of God was moſt illuſtrious. It is upon this account, he is called Light,

Light, as impurity is called darkneſs; both in this ſenſe are oppoſed to one another: he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemiſh in his eſſence, nature, and operations.

If any, this attribute hath an excellency above his other perfections.—There are ſome attributes of God we prefer, becauſe of our intereſt in them, and the relation they bear to us: as we eſteem his goodneſs before his power; and his mercy whereby he relieves us, before his juſtice whereby he puniſheth us. As there are ſome we more delight in, becauſe of the goodneſs we receive by them; ſo there are ſome that God delights to honour, becauſe of their excellency.

None is ſounded out ſo loftily with ſuch ſolemnity, and ſo frequently by angels that ſtand before his throne, as this.—Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praiſes of it, as this? Iſa. vi. 3, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory*; and Rev. iv. 8, *The four beaſts reſt not day and night, ſaying holy, holy, holy Lord God, Almighty, &c.* His power or ſovereignty, *as Lord of Hoſts*, is but once mentioned; but with a ternal repetition of his holineſs. Do you hear in any angelical ſong any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do you read of the crying out eternal, eternal, eternal; or faithful, faithful, faithful Lord God of Hoſts? Whatſoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and bleſſed ſpirits for ever in heaven.

He ſingles it out to ſwear by.—Pſa. lxxxix. 35, *Once have I ſworn by my holineſs, that I will not lie unto David:* and Amos iv. 2, *The Lord will ſwear by his holineſs:* he twice ſwears by his holineſs, once by his power, Iſa. lxii. 8. once by all, when he ſwears by his name, Jer. xliv. 26. He lays here his holineſs to pledge for the aſſurance of his promiſe, as the attributes moſt dear to him, moſt valued by

him, as though no other could give an aſſurance parallel to it in this concern of an everlaſting redemption which is there ſpoken of: he that ſwears, ſwears by a greater than himſelf; God having no greater than himſelf, ſwears by himſelf: and ſwearing here by his holineſs, ſeems to equal that ſingle one to all his other attributes; as if he were more concerned in the honour of it, than of all the reſt. It is as if he ſhould have ſaid; ſince I have not a more excellent perfection to ſwear by, than that of my holineſs, I lay this to pawn for your ſecurity, and bind myſelf by that which I will never part with, were it poſſible for me to be ſtripped of all the reſt. It is a tacit imprecation of himſelf, if I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be truſted by angels or men. This attribute he makes moſt of.

It is his glory and beauty.—Holineſs is the honour of the creature, *ſanctification and honour* are linked together, 1 Theſſ. iv. 4. much more is it the honour of God; it is the image of God in the creature. When we take the picture of a man, we draw the moſt beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greateſt excellency. When God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the ſpirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the moſt beautiful perfection of God, and moſt valuable with him. Power, is his hand and arm; omniſcience, his eye; mercy, his bowels; eternity, his duration; his holineſs is his beauty; 2 Chron. xx. 21, *Should praiſe the beauty of holineſs.* In Pſa. xxvii. 4, David deſires *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy temple*; that is, the holineſs of God manifeſted in his hatred of ſin in the daily ſacrifices. Holineſs was the beauty of the temple, Iſa. xlvi. 11. Holy and beautiful houſe are joined together; much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the ſanctuary.

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This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. A heathen philoſopher could call it, the beauty of the divine eſſence, and ſay, that God was not ſo happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue. And the angel's ſong intimates it to be his glory, Iſa. vi. 3, *The whole earth is full of thy glory*; that is, of his holineſs in his laws, and in his judgments againſt ſin; that being the attribute applauded by them before.

It is his very life.—So it is called Eph. iv. 18. *Alienated from the life of God*, that is, from the holineſs of God; ſpeaking of the oppoſite to it, the uncleanneſs and prophaneneſs of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection, always ſet out as the pattern of our actions, *Be you holy, as I am holy*; no other is propoſed as our copy. Alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were ſtript of this, he would be a dead God more than by the want of any other perfection. His ſwearing by it intimates as much; he ſwears often by his own life, *As I live, ſaith the Lord*: ſo he ſwears by his holineſs, as if it were his life, and more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His deity could not outlive the life of his purity.

As it ſeems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, ſo it is the glory of all the reſt.—As it is the glory of the godhead, ſo it is the glory of every perfection in the godhead. As his power is the ſtrength of them, ſo his holineſs is the beauty of them. As all would be weak without almightineſs to back them; ſo all would be uncomely without holineſs to adorn them. Should this be ſullied, all the reſt would loſe their honour and their comfortable efficacy. As at the ſame inſtant that the ſun ſhould loſe its light, it would

loſe its heat, its ſtrength, its generative and quickening virtue. As ſincerity is the luſtre of every grace in a chriſtian, ſo is purity the ſplendor of every attribute in the godhead. His juſtice, is a holy juſtice; his wiſdom, a holy wiſdom; his arm of power, is a holy arm, Pſa. xcviii. 1.—his truth, or promiſe, a holy promiſe, Pſa. cv. 42. Holy and true go hand in hand, Rev. vi. 10. His name, which ſignifies all his attributes in conjunction, is holy, Pſa. ciii. 1. Yea, he is *righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Pſa. cxlv. 17. It is the rule of all his acts, the ſource of all his puniſhments. If every attribute of the deity were a diſtinct member, purity would be the form, the ſoul, the ſpirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to ſin, his mercy a fondneſs, his wrath a madneſs, his power a tyranny, his wiſdom an unworthy ſubtilty. It is this gives a decorum to all. His mercy is not exerciſed without it, ſince he pardons none but thoſe that have an intereſt, by union, in the obedience of a mediator, which was ſo delightful to his infinite purity. His juſtice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exerciſe of it, is not acted out of the compaſs of this rule. In acts of man's vindictive juſtice there is ſomething of impurity, perturbation, paſſion, ſome mixture of cruelty; but none of theſe fall upon God in the ſevereſt acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the reſemblance of fire, to ſignify his anger againſt the houſe of Judah for their idolatry, *from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire; but from the loins upward, the appearance of brightneſs, as the colour of amber*, Ezek. vii. 2. His heart is clear in his moſt terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he ſcorcheth and burns his enemies: He is holy in the moſt fiery appearance.

This attribute therefore is never ſo much applauded, as when his ſword hath been drawn, and he hath

hath manifeſted the greateſt fierceneſs againſt his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expreſſion of it in the text, follows juſt upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army, *The ſea covered them; they ſank as lead in the mighty waters:* then it follows, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holineſs?* And when it was ſo celebrated by the ſeraphims, Iſa. vi. 3, it was when the *poſts moved* and the *houſe filled with ſmoke*, ver. 4. which are ſigns of anger, Pſa. xviii. 7, 8. And when he was about to ſend Iſaiah upon a meſſage of ſpiritual and temporal judgments, that he would make the *heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes ſhut; waſte their cities without inhabitant, and their houſes without man, and make the land deſolate*, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. and the angels which here applaud him for his holineſs, are the executioners of his juſtice; and here called ſeraphims, from burning, or fiery ſpirits, as being the miniſters of his wrath. His juſtice is part of his holineſs, whereby he doth reduce into order thoſe things that are out of order. When he is conſuming men by his fury, he doth not diminiſh, but manifeſt purity; Zeph. iii. 5, *The juſt Lord is in the midſt of her, he will do no iniquity.* Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is alſo celebrated with praiſe by the four beaſts about his throne, when he appears in a covenant garb, with a rainbow about his throne, and yet with thunderings and lightnings ſhot out againſt his enemies, Rev. iv. 8. compared with ver. 3, 5; to ſhew, that all his acts of mercy, as well as juſtice, are clear from any ſtain.

This is the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightneſs of all his actions: nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honour of this attribute.

For

For the better underſtanding this attribute, obſerve.

1. The nature of this holineſs.
2. The demonſtration of it.
3. The purity of his nature in all his acts about ſin.
4. The uſe of all to ourſelves.

Firſt, The nature of divine holineſs.—In general, The holineſs of God negatively, is a perfect and unpolluted freedom from all evil.—As we call gold pure that is not embaſed by any droſs, and that garment clean that is free from any ſpot; ſo the nature of God is eſtranged from all ſhadow of evil, all imaginable contagion.

Poſitively, It is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will, as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingneſs to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in every thing agreeable to his will, and an abhorrence of every thing contrary thereunto.

As there is no darkneſs in his underſtanding, ſo there is no ſpot in his will: as his mind is poſſeſſed with all truth, ſo there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodneſs; he hates all falſity and evil. In regard of his righteouſneſs, he loves righteouſneſs; Pſa. xi. 17, *The righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs*; and *hath no pleaſure in wickedneſs*, Pſa. v. 4. He values purity in his creatures, and deteſts all impurity, whether inward or outward. We may indeed diſtinguiſh the holineſs of God from his righteouſneſs in our conceptions: holineſs is a perfection abſolutely conſidered in the nature of God; righteouſneſs, a perfection as referred to others in his actions towards them and upon them.

In particular, This property of the divine nature is, an eſſential and neceſſary perfection.—He is eſſentially and neceſſarily holy. It is the eſſential glory of his nature: his holineſs is as neceſſary as his being;

being; as neceſſary as his omniſcience: as he cannot but know what is right, ſo he cannot but do what is juſt. His underſtanding is not as created underſtandings, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; ſo his will is not as created will, capable of unrighteouſneſs as well as righteouſneſs. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the divine nature, to know what is right, and to do what is wrong: if ſo, there would be a diminution of his bleſſedneſs, he would not be a God always bleſſed, *bleſſed for ever*, as he is. He is as neceſſarily holy, as he is neceſſarily God; as neceſſarily without ſin, as without change. As he was God from eternity, ſo he was holy from eternity. He was gracious, merciful, juſt in his own nature, and alſo holy; though no creature had been framed by him to exerciſe his grace, mercy, juſtice, or holineſs upon. If God had not created a world, he had in his own nature been almighty, and able to create a world. If there never had been any thing but himſelf, yet he had been omniſcient, knowing every thing that was within the verge and compaſs of his infinite power; ſo he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifeſt this purity. Theſe perfections are ſo neceſſary, that the nature of God could not ſubſiſt without them. And the acts of thoſe *ad intra*, or within himſelf, are neceſſary; for being omniſcient in nature, there muſt be an act of knowledge of himſelf and his own nature. Being infinitely holy, an act of holineſs in infinitely loving himſelf, muſt neceſſarily flow from this perfection. As the divine will cannot but be perfect; ſo it cannot be wanting to render the higheſt love to itſelf, to its goodneſs, to the divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed the acts of thoſe *ad extra* are not neceſſary, but upon a condition. To love righteouſneſs without himſelf, or to deteſt ſin, or inflict puniſhment for the committing of it, could not have

have been, had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no ſinning creature for him to lothe, and to exerciſe his juſtice upon as the object of puniſhment.

Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them neceſſary. As it is at God's liberty whether he will create a rational creature, or no: but when he decrees to make either angel or man, it is neceſſary from the perfection of his nature to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will ſpeak to him, or no; but if he doth, it is impoſſible for God to ſpeak that which is falſe, becauſe of his infinite perfection of veracity, It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to ſin; but if he ſees good to ſuffer it, it is impoſſible but that he ſhould deteſt that creature that goes croſs to his righteous nature. His holineſs is not ſolely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy; he might love iniquity and hate righteouſneſs; he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy: for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the poſitive law he gave to Adam, of not eating the forbidden fruit, was a pure act of his will; he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleaſed, as well as prohibited him: but what is moral and good in its own nature, is neceſſarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, becauſe of the tranſcendent eminency of his nature, and righteouſneſs of his will. As it is impoſſible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to diſpenſe with a creature for not loving him; for this would be to command a thing intrinſically evil, the higheſt ingratitude, the very ſpirit of all wickedneſs, which conſiſts in the hating God. Yet though God be thus neceſſarily holy, he is not ſo by a bare and ſimple neceſſity, as the ſun ſhines, or the fire burns; but by a free neceſſity, not compelled

pelled thereto, but inclined from the fulneſs of the perfection of his own nature and will; ſo as by no means he can be unholy, becauſe he will not be unholy; it is againſt his nature to be ſo.

God is only abſolutely holy. There is none holy as the Lord.—It is the peculiar glory of his nature. As there is none good but God, ſo none holy but God. No creature can be eſſentially holy, becauſe mutable: holineſs is the ſubſtance of God; but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himſelf, creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holineſs; holineſs, in the higheſt, is his ſole prerogative. As the higheſt heaven is called the heaven of heavens, becauſe it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and hath a greater vaſtneſs above all that it incloſeth; ſo is God the Holy of Holies, he contains the holineſs of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wiſdom, excellency, and power of the creatures, if compared with the wiſdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileneſs, and weakneſs; ſo the higheſt created purity, if ſet in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanneſs. Rev. xv. 4, *Thou only art holy:* it is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the ſun; *The heavens are not pure in his ſight, and his angels he charged with folly,* Job iv. 18. Though God hath crowned the angels with an unſpotted ſanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory; yet as illuſtrious as they are, they have an unworthineſs in their own nature to appear before the throne of ſo holy a God; their holineſs grows dim and pale in his preſence. It is but a weak ſhadow of that divine purity, whoſe light is ſo glorious, that it makes them cover their faces out of weakneſs to behold it, and cover their feet out of ſhame of themſelves. They are not pure in his ſight, becauſe though they love God (which is a principle

principle of holineſs) as much as they can, yet not ſo much as he deſerves: they love him with the intenſeſt degree, according to their power; but not with the intenſeſt degree, according to his own amiableneſs: for they cannot infinitely love God, unleſs they were as infinite as God, and had an underſtanding of his perfections equal with himſelf, and as immenſe as his own knowledge. God having an infinite knowledge of himſelf, can only have an infinite love to himſelf, and conſequently an infinite holineſs without any defect; becauſe he loves himſelf according to the vaſtneſs of his own amiableneſs, which no finite being can. Therefore, though the angels be exempt from corruption and ſoil, they cannot enter into compariſon with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimneſs in themſelves. Beſides, he charges them with folly, and puts no truſt in them; becauſe they have the power of ſinning, though not the act of ſinning: they have a poſſible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holineſs is a quality ſeparable from them, but it is inſeparable from God. Had they not at firſt a mutability in their nature, none of them could have ſinned; there had been no devils; but becauſe ſome of them ſinned, the reſt might have ſinned: and though the ſtanding angels ſhall never be changed, yet they are ſtill changeable in their own nature, and their ſtanding is due to grace, not to nature; and though they ſhall be for ever preſerved, yet they are not, nor ever can be immutable by nature, for then they ſhould ſtand upon the ſame bottom with God himſelf; but they are ſupported by grace againſt that changeableneſs of nature which is eſſential to a creature: the Creator *only hath immortality,* that is, immutability.

It is as certain a truth, that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create any thing actually polluted and imperfect. It is as poſſible that the higheſt creature may

may ſin, as it is poſſible that it may be annihilated: it may become not only, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holineſs of a creature may be reduced into nothing, as well as his ſubſtance: but the holineſs of the Creator cannot be diminiſhed, dimmed, or overſhadowed: James i. 17, *He is the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning.* It is as impoſſible his holineſs ſhould be blotted, as that his deity ſhould be extinguiſhed: for whatſoever creature hath eſſentially ſuch or ſuch qualities, cannot be ſtripped of them, without being turned out of its eſſence. As a man is eſſentially rational; and if he ceaſeth to be rational, he ceaſeth to be man. The ſun is eſſentially luminous; if it ſhould become dark in its own body, it would ceaſe to be the ſun. In regard of this abſolute and only holineſs of God, it is thrice repeated by the ſeraphims, Iſa. vi. 3. The threefold repetition of a word notes the certainty or abſoluteneſs of the thing, or the irreverſibleneſs of the reſolve; as Ezek. xxi. 27, *I will overturn, overturn, overturn,* notes the certainty of the judgment; alſo Rev. viii. 8. *Woe, woe, woe,* three times repeated, ſignifies the ſame. The holineſs of God is ſo abſolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be expreſt in creatures, than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniſcience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himſelf.

Secondly, The demonſtrations of it.

1. In the moral law, or law of nature.—2. In the ceremonial law.—3. In the allurements annexed to it for keeping it, and the threatenings to reſtrain from the breaking of it.—4. In the judgments inflicted for the violation of it.

1. In the moral law.—Which is therefore dignified with the title of holy twice in one verſe, Rom. vii. 12. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy,*

holy, juſt, and good: it being the expreſs image of God's will, as our Saviour was of his perſon, and bearing a reſemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put in the ark, that as the mercy ſeat was to repreſent the grace of God, ſo the law was to repreſent the holineſs of God. The pſalmiſt, after he had ſpoken of the glory of God in the heavens, wherein the power of God is expoſed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds; *perfect, pure, clean, righteous,* are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holineſs, than the ſun is in brightneſs; and more mighty in itſelf to command the conſcience, than the ſun is to run its race. As the holineſs of the ſcripture demonſtrates the divinity of its author; ſo the holineſs of the law doth the purity of the law-giver.

The purity of this law is ſeen in the matter of it. It preſcribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is compleat in the holineſs of the firſt table, and the righteouſneſs of the ſecond; which is intimated by the apoſtle, Eph. iv. 24. the one being the rule of what we owe to God: the other being the rule of what we owe to man: there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it diſowns. It is not ſickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action, but it gives it its due praiſe; and not an evil action, but it ſets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in ſcripture called judgments, becauſe they rightly judge of good and evil, and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the underſtanding of David enlightened to know every falſe way, and to hate it. There is no caſe can happen, but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the nobleſt manner of living, a life like God himſelf; honourable for the lawgiver, and

and joyfully for the ſubject. It directs us to the higheſt end; ſets us at a diſtance from all baſe and ſordid practices; it propoſeth light to the underſtanding, and goodneſs to the will. It would tune all the ſtrings, ſet right all the orders of mankind: it cenſures the leaſt mote, countenanceth not any ſtain in the life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any juſtification from it: not a raſh anger, but it frowns upon. As the law-giver wants nothing, as an addition to his bleſſedneſs; ſo his law wants nothing as a ſupplement to its perfection, Deut. iv. 2. What our Saviour ſeems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects; but a reſtoration of it from the corrupt gloſſes, wherewith the ſcribes and phariſees had eclipſed the brightneſs of it: they had curtailed it, and diminiſhed part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the leaſt evil, and left its power only to check the groſſer practices. But Chriſt reſtores it to the due extent of its ſovereignty, and ſhews it in thoſe dimenſions in which the holy men of God conſidered it, as *exceeding broad*, Pſa. cxix. 96, reaching to all actions, all motions, all circumſtances attending them; full of inexhauſtible treaſures of righteouſneſs. And though this law, ſince the fall, doth irritate ſin, it is no diſparagement, but a teſtimony to the righteouſneſs of it; which the apoſtle manifeſts by his *wherefore*, Rom. vii. 8, *ſin taking occaſion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiſcence*; and repeating the ſame ſenſe, ver. 11, ſubjoins a *wherefore*, ver. 12, *Wherefore the law is holy*. The riſing of mens ſinful hearts againſt the law of God, when it ſtrikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their conſciences, evidenceth the holineſs of the law and the law-giver.

In its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of ſin is exaſperated by it; as an hoſtile quality in a creature, will awaken itſelf at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this

beam and tranſcript of God, bears witneſs to a greater clearneſs and beauty in the ſun and original. Undefiled ſtreams manifeſt an untainted fountain.

It is ſeen in the manner of its precepts.—As it preſcribes all good, and forbids all evil; ſo it doth enjoin the one, and baniſh the other as ſuch. The laws of men command virtuous things; not as virtuous in themſelves, but as uſeful for human ſociety; which the magiſtrate is the conſervator of, and the guardian of juſtice. The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only ſuch as are accommodated to their cuſtoms, and are uſeful to preſerve the ligaments of their government. The deſign of them is not ſo much to render the ſubjects good men, as good citizens: they order the practice of thoſe virtues that may ſtrengthen civil ſociety, and diſcountenance thoſe vices only which weaken the ſinews of it: but God, being the guardian of univerſal righteouſneſs, doth not only enact the obſervance of all righteouſneſs, but the obſervance of it as righteouſneſs. He commands that which is juſt in itſelf; he enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices; as they are profitable or injurious to ourſelves, as well as to others.

Men command temperance and juſtice; not as virtues in themſelves, but as they prevent diſorder and confuſion in a commonwealth: and forbid adultery and theft; not as vices in themſelves, but as they are intrenchments upon property: not as hurtful to the perſon that commits them, but as hurtful to the perſon againſt whoſe right they are committed. Upon this account perhaps, Paul applauds the holineſs of the law of God in regard of its own nature, as conſidered in itſelf, more than he doth the juſtice of it in regard of man, and the goodneſs and conveniency of it to the world; Rom. vii 11. the law is holy twice, and juſt and good but once.

In

In the ſpiritual extent of it.—The moſt righteous powers of the world, do not ſo much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their ſubjects are: the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be uſeful, or diſcourage them if they be hurtful to the community. And indeed they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, ſince the inward diſpoſition falls not under their cenſure; and it would be fooliſh for any legiſlative power to make ſuch laws, which it is impoſſible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of ſin, the contempt of the world; they cannot prohibit unclean thoughts, and the atheiſm of the heart. But the law of God ſurmounts in righteouſneſs all the laws of the beſt regulated commonwealths in the world: it reſtrains the licentious heart, as well as the violent hand; it damps the very firſt bubblings of corrupt nature, orders a purity in the ſpring; commands a clean fountain, clean ſtreams, clean veſſels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteouſneſs, and makes the inſide purer than the outſide. It forbids the firſt belchings of a murderous or adulterous intention: it obligeth man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatſoever is under the command of them. It commands the private cloſet to be free from the leaſt cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dirt. It frowns upon all ſtains and pollutions of the moſt retired thoughts: hence the apoſtle calls it a ſpiritual law, Rom. vii. 14, as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man; placing its enſigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its ſceptre the inward motions of

the ſpirit, and commanding over the ſecrets of every man's breaſt.

In regard of the perpetuity of it.—The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the pſalmiſt, Pſal. xix. 9, *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever*; the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands the fear and worſhip of God, and is the rule of it. And indeed God values it at ſuch a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honour of it lie in the duſt, he would not only let heaven and earth paſs away, but expoſe his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had ſuſtained. So holy is it, that the holineſs and righteouſneſs of God cannot diſpenſe with it, cannot abrogate it, without deſpoiling himſelf of his own being: it is a copy of the eternal law. Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himſelf, without ſhewing ſome contempt of his own excellency and very being? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he muſt make himſelf unworthy of love, and worthy of hatred; this would be the higheſt unrighteouſneſs, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our higheſt affections. So God cannot change the firſt command, and order us to worſhip many gods; this would be againſt the excellency and unity of God: for God cannot conſtitute another god, or make any thing worthy of an honour equal with himſelf. Thoſe things that are good, only becauſe they are commanded, are alterable by God: thoſe things that are intrinſically and eſſentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holineſs and righteouſneſs of God ſtand firm. The intrinſic goodneſs of the moral law, the concern God hath for it; the perpetuity of the precepts of the firſt table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the ſecond upon the minds and conſciences of men, as the author of nature for the preſervation of the world; manifeſts the holineſs of the law-maker and governor.

2. His

2. His holineſs appears in the ceremonial law.—In the variety of ſacrifices for ſin, wherein he writ his deteſtation of unrighteouſneſs in bloody characters. His holineſs was more conſtantly expreſt in the continual ſacrifices, than in thoſe rarer ſprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world; which often reached, not the worſt, but the moſt moderate ſinners, and were the occaſions of the queſtioning of the righteouſneſs of his providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments his purity was only now and then manifeſt: by his long patience, he might be imagined by ſome reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them; but by the morning and evening ſacrifice he witneſſed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatſoever was evil.

Beſides thoſe, the occaſional waſhings and ſprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, gave an evidence, that every thing that had a reſemblance to evil, was loathſome to him. Add alſo the prohibitions of eating ſuch and ſuch creatures that were filthy; as the ſwine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the prophane and brutiſh ſinner; which had a moral ſignification, both of the loathſomeneſs of ſin to God, and the averſion of themſelves ought to have to every thing that was filthy.

3. This holineſs appears in the allurements annexed to the law for keeping it; and the threatenings to reſtrain from the breaking of it.—Both promiſes and threatenings have their fundamental root in the holineſs of God, and are both branches of this peculiar perfection. As they reſpect the nature of God, they are declarations of his hatred of ſin, and his love of righteouſneſs; the one belongs to his threatenings, the other to his promiſes; both join together to repreſent this divine perfection to the creature, and to excite to an imitation in the creature. In the one, God would render ſin odious, becauſe dangerous;

gerous; and curb the practice of evil, which would otherwiſe be licentious: in the other, he would commend righteouſneſs, and excite a love of it, which would otherwiſe be cold. By theſe God ſuits the two great affections of men, fear and hope; both the branches of ſelf love in man: the promiſes and threatenings are both the branches of holineſs in God. The end of the promiſes is the ſame with the exhortation the apoſtle concludes from them, 2 Cor. vii. 1, *Having theſe promiſes, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* As the end of precepts, is to direct; the end of threatenings, is to deter from iniquity; ſo that of the promiſes, is to allure to obedience. Thus God breathes out his love to righteouſneſs in every promiſe, his hatred of ſin in every threatening. The rewards offered in the one, are the ſmiles of pleaſed holineſs; and the curſes thundered in the other, are the ſparklings of enraged righteouſneſs.

4. His holineſs appears in the judgments inflicted for the violation of this law.—Divine holineſs is the root of divine juſtice, and divine juſtice is the triumph of divine holineſs. Hence both are expreſſed in ſcripture by one word of righteouſneſs, which ſometimes ſignifies the rectitude of the divine nature, and ſometimes the vindicative ſtroke of his arm; Pſa. ciii. 6, *The Lord executeth righteouſneſs and judgment for all that are oppreſſed.* So Dan. ix. 7, *Righteouſneſs* (that is, juſtice) *belongs to thee.* The vials of wrath are filled from his implacable averſion to iniquity. All penal evils ſhowered down upon the heads of wicked men, ſpread their root in, and branch out from this perfection. All the dreadful ſtorms and tempeſts in the world are blown up by it. Why doth he *rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and a horrible tempeſt? becauſe the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs,* Pſa. xi. 6, 7. And (as was obſerved before) when he was going about the dreadfulleſt work

work that ever was in the world; the overturning the jewiſh ſtate, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and caſhiering a nation (once dear to him) from the honour of his protection; his holineſs, as the ſpring of all this, is applauded by the ſeraphims, Iſa. vi. 3, compared with ver. 9, 10, 11, &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and puniſhment the abhorrency of it. The greatneſs of the crime, and the righteouſneſs of the judge, are the firſt natural ſentiments that ariſe in the minds of men, upon the appearance of divine judgments in the world, by thoſe that are near them. As when men ſee gibbets erected, ſcaffolds prepared, inſtruments of death and torture provided, and grievous puniſhments inflicted; the firſt reflection in the ſpectators, is the malignity of the crime, and the deteſtation the govenors are poſſeſſed with.

How ſeverely hath he puniſhed his moſt noble creatures for it?—The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater coſt than upon other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the tranſgreſſion of his law, are thrown into the furnace of juſtice without any mercy to pity them, Jude 6. And though there were but one ſort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publiſh and keep up his honour below the heavens; yet upon their apoſtacy (though upon a temptation from a ſubtile and inſinuating ſpirit) the man, with all his poſterity, is ſentenced to miſery in life, and death at laſt; and the woman, with all her ſex, have ſtanding puniſhments inflicted on them; which as they begun in their perſons, were to reach as far as the laſt member of their ſucceſſive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a ſpot in his choiceſt work. Men indeed, when there is a crack in an excellent piece of work, or a ſtain upon a rich garment, do not caſt it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the con-

tracted ſpot: but God ſaw no excellency in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he moſt eſteemed in himſelf, was defaced.

How deteſtable to him are the very inſtruments of ſin?—For the ill uſe, the ſerpent, an irrational creature, was put to by the devil, as an inſtrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of thoſe animals are curſt, Gen. iii. 14, *Curſed above all cattle, and above every beaſt of the field.* Not only the devil's head is threatened to be for ever bruiſed, and as ſome think, rendered irrecoverable upon this further teſtimony of his malice in the ſeduction of man; who perhaps without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithſtanding his firſt ſin; though the ſcripture gives us no account of this, only this is the only ſentence we read of pronounced againſt the devil, which puts him into an irrecoverable ſtate by a mortal bruiſing of his head. But, I ſay, he is not only puniſhed, but the organ whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worſe condition than it was before. Thus God hated the ſpunge, whereby the devil deformed his beautiful image: thus God, to manifeſt his deteſtation of ſin, ordered the beaſt whereby any man was ſlain, to be ſlain as well as the malefactor, Levit. xx. 15. The gold and ſilver that had been abuſed to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images; though good in themſelves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houſes, but deteſted and abhorred by them, becauſe they were curſed, and an abomination to the Lord. See with what loathing expreſſions this law is enjoined to them, Deut. vii. 25, 26. So contrary is the holy nature of God to every ſin, that it curſeth every thing that is inſtrumental in it.

How deteſtable is every thing to him that is in the ſinner's poſſeſſion?—The very earth, which God had made Adam the proprietor of, was *curſed for his ſake,* Gen. iii. 17, 18. It loſt its beauty, and lies

lies languiſhing to this day: and notwithſtanding the redemption by Chriſt, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the compleating the fruits of it upon the children of God, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. The whole lower creation was made ſubject to vanity, and put into pangs upon the ſin of man, by the righteouſneſs of God deteſting his offence. How often hath his implacable averſion from ſin been ſhewn: not only in his judgments upon the offender's perſon, but by wrapping up in the ſame judgment thoſe which ſtood in a near relation to them? Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with ſtones, and burned together, Joſh. vii. 24, 25. In the deſtruction of Sodom; not only the grown malefactors, but the young ſpawn, the infants, at preſent incapable of the ſame wickedneſs, and their cattle were burned up by the ſame fire from heaven; and the place where their habitation ſtood, is at this day, partly a heap of aſhes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fiſh that ſwim into it from Jordan, and ſtifles, as is related, by its vapor any bird that attempts to fly over it. O, how deteſtable is ſin to God, that cauſes him to turn a pleaſant land, as the *garden of the Lord*, as it is ſtiled, Gen. xiii. 10, into a lake of ſulphur; to make it both in his word and works, as a laſting monument of his abhorrence of evil!

What deſign hath God in all theſe acts of ſeverity and vindictive juſtice, but to ſet off the luſtre of his holineſs?—He teſtifies himſelf concerned for thoſe laws, which he hath ſet as hedges and limits to the luſts of men; and therefore when he breathes forth his fiery indignation againſt a people, he is ſaid to get himſelf honour: As when he intended the Red Sea ſhould ſwallow up the Egyptian army, Exod. xiv. 17, 18, which Moſes in his triumphant ſong echos back again, Exod. xv. 1, *Thou haſt triumphed glorioufly*; glorioufly in his holineſs, which is the glory of his nature; as Moſes himſelf interprets it

it in the text. When men will not own the holineſs of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of juſtice and puniſhment. In the deſtruction of Aaron's ſons, that were will-worſhippers, and would take ſtrange fire, ſanctified and glorified, are coupled, Lev. x. 3. He glorified himſelf in that act, in vindicating his holineſs before all the people, declaring, that he will not endure ſin and diſobedience. He doth therefore in this life more ſeverely puniſh the ſins of his people, when they preſume upon any act of diſobedience; for a teſtimony, that the nearneſs and dearneſs of any perſon to him, ſhall not make him unconcerned in his holineſs, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments, is to witneſs to the world his abominating of ſin. To puniſh and witneſs againſt men, are one and the ſame thing, Micah i. 2, *The Lord ſhall witneſs againſt you*; and it is the witneſs of God's holineſs, Hoſ. v. 5, *And the pride of Iſrael doth teſtify to his face:* one renders it the excellency of Iſrael, and underſtands it of God; the word which is here in our tranſlation *pride*, is rendered *excellency*, Amos viii. 7, *The Lord God hath ſworn by his excellency*; which is interpreted *holineſs*, Amos iv. 2, *The Lord God hath ſworn by his holineſs.* What is the iſſue or end of this ſwearing by holineſs, and of his excellency teſtifying againſt them? In all thoſe places you will find them to be ſweeping judgments: in one, Iſrael and Ephraim ſhall *fall in their iniquity*; in another, *he will take them away with hooks, and their poſterity with fiſh-hooks*, and in another, *he would never forget any of their works.* He that puniſheth wickedneſs in thoſe he before uſed with the greateſt tenderneſs, furniſheth the world with an undeniable evidence of the deteſtableneſs of it to him. Were not judgments ſometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed, that God were rather an approver, than an enemy to ſin.

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To conclude, ſince God hath made a ſtricter law to guide men; annexed promiſes above the merit of obedience, to allure them; and threatenings, dreadful enough to affright men from diſobedience. He cannot be the cauſe of ſin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the author of that which he ſo ſeverely forbids; or love that which he delights to puniſh; or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant inſtruments in the offences of his reaſonable creatures?

The holineſs of God, appears in our reſtoration. —It is in the glaſs of the goſpel we behold the *glory of the Lord*, that is, the glory of the Lord, into whoſe image we are changed; but we are changed into nothing, as the image of God, but into holineſs: we bore not upon us by creation, nor by regeneration, the image of any other perfection: we cannot be changed into his omnipotence, omniſcience, &c. but into the image of his righteouſneſs. This is the pleaſing and glorious ſight the goſpel-mirror darts in our eyes. The whole ſcene of redemption, is nothing elſe but a diſcovery of judgment and righteouſneſs, Iſa. 1. 27, *Zion ſhall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteouſneſs.*

Thirdly, I am to lay down ſome propoſitions in the defence of God's holineſs in all his acts, about or concerning ſin.

It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too buſy and raſh in inquiries and concluſions about the reaſon of God's providence in the matter of ſin. The ſcripture hath put a bar in the way of ſuch curioſity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wiſdom and righteouſneſs in his judgments are unſearchable: much more the ways of God's holineſs, as he ſtands in relation to ſin, as a governor of the world; we cannot conſider thoſe things without danger of ſlipping: our eyes are too weak to look upon the ſun without being dazzled:

dazzled: too much curioſity met with a juſt check in our firſt parent. To be deſirous to know the reaſon of all God's proceedings in the matter of ſin, is to ſecond the ambition of Adam, to be as wiſe as God, and know the reaſon of his actings equally with himſelf. It is more eaſy, as the ſame author ſaith, to give an account of God's providence ſince the revolt of man, and the poiſon that hath univerſally ſeized upon human nature, than to make gueſſes at the manner of the fall of the firſt man. The ſcripture hath given us but a ſhort account of the manner of it, to diſcourage too curious inquiries into it.

It is certain that God made man upright; and when man ſinned in Paradiſe, God was active in ſuſtaining the ſubſtantial nature and act of the ſinner while he was ſinning, though not in ſupporting the ſinfulneſs of the act: he was permiſſive in ſuffering it: he was negative in withholding that grace which might certainly have prevented his crime, and conſequently his ruin; though he withheld nothing that was ſufficient for his reſiſtance of that temptation wherewith he was aſſaulted. And ſince the fall of man, God as a wiſe governor is directive of the events of the tranſgreſſion, and draws the choiceſt good out of the blackeſt evil, and limits the ſins of men, that they creep not ſo far as the evil nature of men would urge them to; and as a righteous judge, he takes away the talent from idle ſervants, and the light from wicked ones, whereby they ſtumble and fall into crimes, by the inclinations and proneneſs of their own corrupt natures, leaves them to the bias of their own vitious habits, denies that grace which they have forfeited, and have no right to challenge; and turns their ſinful actions into puniſhments, both to the committers of them, and others.

Firſt propoſition. God's holineſs is not chargeable with any blemiſh for his creating man in a mutable ſtate.—It is true, angels and men were created

created with a changeable nature; and though there was a rich and glorious ſtamp upon them by the hand of God, yet their natures were not incapable of a baſe and vile ſtamp from ſome other principle. As the ſilver which bears upon it the image of a great prince, is capable of being melted down, and imprinted with no better an image than that of ſome vile and monſtrous beaſt. Though God made man upright, yet he was capable of ſeeking *many inventions*, Eccl. vii. 29; yet the hand of God was not defiled by forming man with ſuch a nature. It was ſuitable to the wiſdom of God to give the rational creature, whom he had furniſhed with a power of acting righteouſly, the liberty of choice, and not fix him in an unchangeable ſtate without a trial of him in his natural; that if he did obey, his obedience might be the more valuable; and if he did freely offend, his offence might be more inexcuſable.

No creature can be capable of immutability by nature.—Mutability is ſo eſſential to a creature, that a creature cannot be ſuppoſed without it: you muſt ſuppoſe it a creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be of an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the ſupreme being. *God only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Immortality, as oppoſed not only to a natural, but to a ſinful death; the word only appropriates every ſort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnerſhip with God in this by nature. Every creature therefore is capable of a death in ſin. None is good but God, and none is naturally free from change but God; which excludes every creature from the ſame prerogative, and certainly if one angel ſinned, all might have ſinned, becauſe there was the ſame root of mutability in one as well as another. It is as poſſible for a creature to be a creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things, whether angels or men, are made of nothing,

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and therefore capable of defection; becauſe a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good, *per eſſentiam*, or eſſentially good, but by participation from another. Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a ſuperior which created and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and conſequently capable of diſobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to tranſgreſs it as well as obey it. God cannot ſin, becauſe he can have no ſuperior to impoſe a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of ſuch a mould and temper, but he muſt be as well capable of chuſing wrong, as of chuſing right; and therefore the ſtanding angels, and glorified ſaints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature that they are ſo, but by grace, and the good pleaſure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have ſtill in their nature a remote power of ſinning, but it ſhall never be brought into act, becauſe God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act. Since therefore mutability is eſſential to a creature, as a creature, this changeableneſs cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God's creating act, but did neceſſarily reſult from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableneſs doth reſult from the eſſence of God. The brittleneſs of a glaſs is no blame to the art of him that blew up the glaſs into ſuch a faſhion; that imperfection of brittleneſs is not from the workman, but the matter: ſo though changeableneſs be an imperfection, yet it is ſo neceſſary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it: beſides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable to exerciſe their wills, yet they were not neceſſitated to evil; and this mutability did not infer a neceſſity that they ſhould fall; becauſe ſome angels, which had the ſame root of changeableneſs

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in their natures with thoſe that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableneſs of changing, and neceſſity of changing were one and the ſame thing.

Though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil.—There could be nothing of evil in him that God created after his own image, and pronounced good, Gen. i. 27, 31. Man had an ability to ſtand, as well as a capacity to fall: he was created with a principle of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good, and moving to him as his laſt end; there was a beam of light in man's underſtanding to know the rule he was to conform to, a harmony between his reaſon and his affections, an original righteouſneſs: ſo that it ſeemed more eaſy for him to determine his will to continue in obedience to the precept, than to ſwerve from it; to adhere to God as his chief good, than to liſten to the charms of ſatan. God created him with thoſe advantages, that he might with more facility have kept his eyes fixt upon the divine beauty, than turn his back upon it; and with greater eaſe have kept the precept God gave him than have broken it. The very firſt thought darted, or impreſſion made by God upon the angelical or human nature, was the knowledge of himſelf as their author, and could be no other than ſuch whereby both angels and men might be excited to a love of that adorable being that had framed them ſo glorioufly out of nothing: and if they turned their wills and affections to another object, it was not by the direction of God, but contrary to the impreſſion God made upon them; or the firſt thought he flaſhed into them: they turned themſelves to the admiring their own excellency, or affecting an advantage diſtinct from that which they were to look for only from God. 1 Tim. iii. 6, Pride was the cauſe of the condemnation of the devil. Though the wills of angels and men were created mutable,

and

and ſo were imperfect, yet they were not created evil. Though they might ſin, yet they might not ſin, and therefore were not evil in their own nature. What reflection then could this mutability of their nature be upon God? ſo far is it from any, that he is fully cleared, by ſtoring up in the nature of man ſufficient proviſion againſt his departure from him. God was ſo far from creating him evil, that he fortified him with a knowledge in his underſtanding, and a ſtrength in his nature to withſtand any invaſion. The knowledge was exerciſed by Eve in the very moment of the ſerpent's aſſaulting her; Gen. iii. 3, *Eve ſaid to the ſerpent, God hath ſaid, ye ſhall not eat of it*; and had her thoughts been intent upon this, *God hath ſaid*, and not diverted to the motions of the ſenſitive appetite and liquoriſh palate, it had been ſufficient to put by all the paſſes the devil did, or could have made at her. So that yon ſee, though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. This clears the holineſs of God.

Second propoſition, God's holineſs is not blemiſhed by enjoining man a law, which he knew he would not obſerve.

The law was not above his ſtrength.—Had the law been impoſſible to be obſerved, no crime could have been imputed to the ſubject, the fault had lain wholly upon the governor; the non-obſervance of it had been from a want of ſtrength, and not from a want of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the ſun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too ſhort to perform it. But the law ſet him for a rule, had nothing of impoſſibility in it; it was eaſy to be obſerved; the command was rather below, than above his ſtrength; and the ſanction of it was more apt to reſtrain and ſcare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts againſt it: he had as much power, or rather more,

to

to conform to it; than to warp from it; and greater arguments and intereſt to be obſervant of it, than to violate it; his all was ſecured by the one, and his ruin aſcertained by the other.

The commands of God are not grievous; from the firſt to the laſt command, there is nothing impoſſible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all ſummed up in a love to God, which was the pleaſure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not by inconſiderateneſs neglected the dictates and reſolves of his own underſtanding. The law was ſuited to the ſtrength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature: in which reſpect the apoſtle calls it good, as it refers to man, as well as holy, as it refers to God. Now ſince God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with underſtanding and will, not to be governed according to his nature without a law; was it congruous to the wiſdom of God to reſpect only the future ſtate of man, which from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foreſee would be miſerable, by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wiſdom of God to reſpect only this future ſtate, and not the preſent ſtate of the creature; and therefore leave him lawleſs, becauſe he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wiſe governor, becauſe he foreſaw that man would ceaſe to act like an obedient ſubject? Shall a righteous magiſtrate forbear to make juſt and good laws, becauſe he forſees, either from the diſpoſitions of his ſubjects, their ill humour, or ſome circumſtances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break thoſe laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magiſtrate who minds the rule of righteouſneſs, and the neceſſary duty of his government, ſince he is not the cauſe of thoſe turbulent affections in

men, which he wiſely foreſees will riſe up againſt his juſt edicts.

God's foreknowledge that his law would not be obſerved, lays no blame upon him.—Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not neceſſitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall; that men would do ſuch and ſuch actions; that Judas would betray our Saviour: God foreknew all thoſe things from eternity; but it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not neceſſitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his poſterity, in the doing thoſe actions that were ſo foreſeen by God; they voluntarily run into ſuch courſes, not by any impulſion. God's knowledge was not ſuſpended between certainty and uncertainty: he certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did neceſſitate him to it: he could find no cauſe of his own ſin, but the liberty of his own will: he charges the occaſion of his ſin upon the woman, and conſequently upon God in giving the woman to him. He could not be ſo ignorant of the nature of God, as to imagine him without a foreſight of future things, ſince his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation, was greater than any man's ſince, in all probability. But however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's knowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any neceſſity upon him, any kind of conſtraint of him in his action that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of ſo ſtrong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death; eſpecially when he urgeth ſo weak an argument to impute his crime to God, as the gift of the woman;

woman; as if that which was deſigned him for a help, were intended for his ruin. If God's preſcience takes away the liberty of the creature, there is no ſuch thing as a free action in the world, (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, elſe we render God of a limitted underſtanding,) nor ever was, no not by God himſelf, *ad extra:* for whatſoever he hath done in creation, whatſoever he hath done ſince the creation, was foreknown by him; he reſolved to do it, and therefore foreknew that he would do it: did God do it therefore neceſſarily, as neceſſity is oppoſed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, ſo he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is ſo far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it ſpeaks ſomething more, doth not diſſolve it: God did not only foreknow, but determine the ſuffering of Chriſt. It was neceſſary therefore that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, that God might not be miſtaken in his foreknowledge, or come ſhort of his determinate decree: but did this take away the liberty of Chriſt in ſuffering? Eph. v. 2, *Who offered himſelf up to God*; that is, by a voluntary act, as well as deſigned to do it by a determinate counſel. It did infallibly ſecure the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Chriſt's willingneſs to ſuffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him ſuffer. God's preſcience is God's proviſion of things ariſing from their proper cauſes: as a gardener foreſees in his plants the leaves and the flowers that will ariſe from them in the ſpring, becauſe he knows the ſtrength and nature of their ſeveral roots which lie under ground, but his foreſight of theſe things is not the cauſe of the riſe and appearance of thoſe flowers. If any of us ſee a ſhip moving towards ſuch a rock or quick-ſand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we ſhall certainly foreſee that the ſhip will be torn in pieces by the

rock, or ſwallowed up by the ſands; but is this foreſight of ours from the cauſes, any cauſe of the effect, or can we from hence be ſaid to be the authors of the miſcarriage of the ſhip, and the loſs of the paſſengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreſeen by God to come to paſs by the conſent of his freewill in the choice of the propoſed temptation: God foreknew Adam would ſin, and if Adam would not have ſinned, God would have foreknown that he would not ſin. Adam might eaſily have detected the ſerpent's fraud, and made a better election; God foreſaw that he would not do it; God's foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent; whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, becauſe God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it, was no more a cauſe of his action, than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his maſter foreknew that he ſhould betray him, for Chriſt had acquainted him with it, John xiii. 21, 26, yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Chriſt with any guilt of his treachery.

Third propoſition. The holineſs of God is not blemiſhed by decreeing the eternal rejection of ſome men.—Reprobation in its firſt notion is an act of preterition, or paſſing by. A man is not made wicked by the act of God; but it ſuppoſeth him wicked; and ſo it is nothing elſe but God's leaving a man in that guilt and filth wherein he beholds him. In its ſecond notion it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a puniſhment; Jude iv, *An ordaining to condemnation.* And though it be an eternal act of God, yet in order of nature it follows upon the foreſight of the tranſgreſſion of man, and ſuppoſeth the crime. God conſiders Adam's revolt, and views the whole maſs of his corrupted poſterity, and chooſes ſome to reduce

reduce to himſelf by his grace, and leaves others to lie ſinking in their ruins. Since all mankind fell by the fall of Adam, and have corruption conveyed to them ſucceſſively by that root whereof they are branches: all men might juſtly be left wallowing in that miſerable condition to which they were reduced by the apoſtacy of their common head; and God might have paſſed by the whole race of man, as well as he did the fallen angels, without any hope of redemption. He was no more bound to reſtore man, than to reſtore devils, nor bound to repair the nature of any one ſon of Adam; and had he dealt with men as he dealt with the devils, they had all of them as little juſt ground to complain of God; for all men deſerved to be left to themſelves, for all were concluded under ſin: but God calls out ſome to make monuments of his grace, which is an act of the ſovereign mercy of that dominion whereby *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy*, Rom. ix. 18. Others he paſſes by, and leaves them remaining in that corruption of nature wherein they were born. If men have a power to diſpoſe of their own goods, without any unrighteouſneſs, why ſhould not God diſpoſe of his own grace, and beſtow it upon whom he pleaſes, ſince it is a debt to none, but a free gift to any that enjoy it? God is not the cauſe of ſin in this, becauſe his operation about this is negative; it is not an action, but a denial of action, and therefore cannot be the cauſe of the evil actions of men. God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he doth not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills ſo powerfully, as to expel their darkneſs, and root out thoſe evil habits which poſſeſs them by nature. God could, if he would, ſavingly enlighten the minds of all men in the world, and quicken their hearts with a new life by an invincible grace; but in not doing it, there is no poſitive act of God, but a ceſſation of action: we may with as much reaſon ſay, that God is the cauſe of all the ſinful actions

that are committed by the co-operation of devils, ſince their firſt rebellion, becauſe he leaves them to themſelves, and beſtows not a new grace upon them: as ſay God is the cauſe of the ſins of thoſe that he overlooks and leaves in that ſtate of guilt wherein he found them. God did not paſs by any without the conſideration of ſin; ſo that this act of God is not repugnant to his holineſs, but conformable to his juſtice.

Fourth propoſition. The holineſs of God is not blemiſhed by his ſecret will to ſuffer ſin to enter into the world.—God never willed ſin by his preceptive will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never ſaid, Let there be ſin under the heaven, as he ſaid, *Let there be water under the heaven.* Nor doth he will it by infuſing any habit of it, or ſtirring up inclinations to it; no, *God tempts no man,* Jam. i. 13. Nor doth he will it by his approving will; it is deteſtable to him, nor ever can be otherwiſe: he cannot approve it either before commiſſion or after.

The will of God is in ſome ſort concurrent with ſin.—He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, to which by his omnipotence he could put a bar. If he did poſitively will it, it might be wrought by himſelf, and ſo could not be evil. If he did in no ſort will it, it would not be committed by his creature: ſin entered into the world, either God willing the permiſſion of it, or not willing the permiſſion of it. The latter cannot be ſaid; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he pleaſed, baniſh all ſin in a moment out of the world: He could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man; they did not ſin whether he would or no. He might by his grace have ſtept in the firſt moment, and made a ſpecial impreſſion upon them of the happineſs they already

already poſſeſſed, and the miſery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the ſin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of thoſe that continued in their happy ſtate: he might have appeared to man, informed him of the iſſue of his deſign, and made ſecret impreſſions upon his heart, ſince he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all ſin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing in it; he was as well able to bar ſin for ever out of the world, as to let creatures lie in the womb of nothing, wherein they were firſt wrapped. To ſay God doth will ſin as he doth other things, is to deny his holineſs; to ſay it entered without any thing of his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he did neceſſitate Adam to fall, what ſhall we think of his purity? If Adam did fall without any concern of God's will in it, what ſhall we ſay of his ſovereignity? the one taints his holineſs, and the other clips his power. If it came without any thing of his will in it, and he did not foreſee it, where is his omniſcience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence, Rom. ix. 19, *Who hath reſiſted his will?* There cannot be a luſtful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power; Gen. xx. 6, *I withheld thee:* nor a curſing word in in Balaam's mouth, unleſs God give power to ſpeak it; Numb. xxii. 38, *Have I now any power at all to ſay any thing? The word that God puts in my mouth, that ſhall I ſpeak.* As no action could be ſinful, if God had not forbidden it; ſo no ſin could be committed, if God did not will to give way to it.

God wills the permiſſion of ſin.—He doth not poſitively will ſin, but he poſitively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of ſin, yet he approves of that act of his will, whereby he permits it. For ſince that ſin could not enter into the world without ſome concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it, could not be

diſpleaſing to him: God could never be diſpleaſed with his own act: *He is not as man that he ſhould repent*, 1 Sam. xv. 29. What God cannot repent of, he cannot but approve of: it is contrary to the bleſſedneſs of God to diſapprove of, and be diſpleaſed with any act of his own will. If he hated any act of his own will, he would hate himſelf, he would be under a torture: every one that hates his own acts, is under ſome diſturbance and torment for them. That which is permitted by him, is in itſelf, and in regard of the evil of it, hateful to him: but as the proſpect of that good which he aims at in the permiſſion of it is pleaſing to him; ſo that act of his will whereby he permits it, is uſhered in by an approving act of his underſtanding. Either God approved of the permiſſion, or not; if he did not approve his own act of permiſſion, he could not have decreed an act of permiſſion. It is inconceivable that God ſhould decree ſuch an act which he deteſted, and poſitively will that which he hated. Though God hated ſin, as being againſt his holineſs, yet he did not hate the permiſſion of ſin, as being ſubſervient by the immenſity of his wiſdom to his own glory. He could never be diſpleaſed with that which was the reſult of his eternal counſel, as this decree of permitting ſin was, as well as any other decree reſolved upon in his own breaſt. For as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, ſo he permits nothing in time but what he decreed from eternity to permit. To ſpeak properly therefore, God doth not will ſin, but he wills the permiſſion of it, and this will to permit is active and poſitive in God.

The holineſs of God is not tainted by this, becauſe he was under no obligation to hinder their commiſſion of ſin.—Ceaſing to act, whereby to prevent a crime or miſchief, brings not a perſon permitting it, under guilt, unleſs where he is under an obligation to prevent it: but God in regard of his abſolute

abſolute dominion cannot be charged with any ſuch obligation. One man that doth not hinder the murder of another, when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part; but it is to be conſidered, that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the ſame kind, and being the other's brother by a communion of blood: alſo under an obligation of the law of charity, enacted by the common ſovereign of the world: but what tie was there upon God? ſince the infinite tranſcendency of his nature, and his ſovereign dominion free him from any ſuch obligation; Job ix. 12, *If he takes away, who ſhall ſay, what doſt thou?* God might have prevented the fall of men and angels, he might have confirmed them all in a ſtate of perpetual innocency; but where is the obligation? He had made the creature a debtor to himſelf, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this caſe, it muſt be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound to hinder it. No perſon can be juſtly charged with another's fault, merely for not preventing it, unleſs he be bound to prevent it; elſe not only the firſt ſin of angels and man would be imputed to God, as the author, but all the ſins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, becauſe he had no ſuperior to impoſe any law upon him; and it will be hard to prove, that he was obliged from his own nature to prevent the entrance of ſin, which he would uſe as an occaſion to declare his own holineſs ſo tranſcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifeſted by a total excluſion of it, viz. in the death of Chriſt. He is no more bound in his own nature, to preſerve by ſupernatural grace his creatures from falling, after he had framed him with a ſufficient ſtrength to ſtand; than he was obliged in his own nature to bring his creature into being, when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much leſs bound to create him with ſupernatural gifts; though

though ſince God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural uprightneſs and rectitude.

God did as much for angels and men, as became a wiſe governor. He had publiſhed his law, backed it with ſevere penalties, and the creature wanted not a natural ſtrength to obſerve and obey it. Had not man a power to obey all the precepts of the law, as well as one? How was God bound to give him more grace, ſince what he had already was enough to ſhield him, and keep up his reſiſtance againſt all the power of hell? It had been enough to have pointed his will againſt the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promiſe paſt to Adam of any further grace, which he could plead as a tie upon God? No ſuch voluntary limit upon God's ſupreme dominion appears upon record. Was any thing due to man, which he had not? Any thing promiſed him, which was not performed? What action of debt then can the creature bring againſt God. Indeed, when man began to neglect the light of his own reaſon, and became inconſiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his underſtanding by a ſpecial flaſh, a ſupernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular conſideration of the neceſſity of his obedience, the miſery he was approaching to by his ſin, the folly of any ſuch apprehenſion of an equality in knowledge; he might have convinced him of the falſity of the ſerpent's arguments, and uncaſed to him the venom that lay under thoſe baits. But how doth it appear that God was bound to thoſe additional acts, when he had already lighted up in him a *ſpirit which was the candle of the Lord*, Prov. xx. 27. whereby he was able to diſcern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not neceſſitate man to ſin, did not counſel him to it; that he had given him ſufficient warning in the threatening, and ſufficient ſtrength in his faculties, to fortify him againſt

againſt temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing; he withdrew no help from him, that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preſerving grace of God, and God was not bound to offer it, when he was not petitioned for it eſpecially: yet if he had begged it, God having before furniſhed him ſufficiently, might by the right of his ſovereign dominion have denied it, without any impeachment of his holineſs and righteouſneſs. Though he would not in ſuch a caſe have dealt ſo bountifully with his creature, as he might have done; yet he could not have been impleaded, as dealing unrighteouſly with his creature. The ſingle word that God had already uttered, when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppoſe againſt all the devil's wiles, which tended to invallidate that word: the underſtanding of man could not imagine, that the word of God was vainly ſpoken; and the very ſuggeſtion of the devil, as if the Creator ſhould envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous, if he had attended to the voice of his own reaſon. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteouſly in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature.

Fourthly, The Uſe of all to ourſelves.

Is holineſs a tranſcendant perfection belonging to the nature of God? The firſt uſe ſhall be of inſtruction and information.

1. How great and how frequent is the contempt of this eminent perfection in the deity?—Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God moſt amiable in himſelf, renders him moſt hateful to his apoſtate creature. It is impoſſible that he that loves iniquity, can affect that which is irreconcilably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing ſo contrary to the ſinfulneſs of man as the holineſs of God, and nothing is thought of by the ſinner with ſo much deteſtation. How do men account that which is the moſt glorious perfection of the divinity, unworthy

worthy to be regarded as an accompliſhment of their own ſouls? and when they are preſſed to an imitation of it, and a deteſtation of what is contrary to it, have the ſame ſentiments in their heart which the devil had in his language to Chriſt, *Why art thou come to torment us before our time?* What an enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is viſible in the practice of the heathen, who among all their heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came neareſt to it, but for their valour, or ſome uſefulneſs in the concerns of this life. Æſculapius was deified for his ſkill in the cure of diſeaſes; Bacchus for the uſe of the grape; Vulcan for his operations by fire; and Hercules for his deſtroying of tyrants and monſters: but none for their mere virtue: as if any thing of purity were unworthy their conſideration in the frame of a deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections. So eſſential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himſelf, though they own all the other attributes of his nature, Pſa. lxxxi. 11, *Iſrael would none of me*; why? becauſe *they walked not in his ways*, ver. 13. thoſe ways wherein the purity of the divine nature was moſt conſpicuous: they would own him in his power, when they ſtood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in diſtreſs; but they would not imitate him in his holineſs. This being the luſtre of divine nature, the contempt of it is an obſcuring all his other perfections, and daſhing a blot upon his whole ſcutcheon. To own all the reſt, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monſter, a deformed power. Indeed, all ſin is againſt this attribute; all ſin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holineſs of his being: all ſin is a violence to this perfection: there is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venemous

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ſting againſt the divine purity: ſome ſins are directed againſt his omniſcience, as ſecret wickedneſs; ſome againſt his providence, as diſtruſt; ſome againſt his mercy, as unbelief; ſome againſt his wiſdom, as neglecting the means inſtituted by him, cenſuring his ways and actings; ſome againſt his power, as truſting in means more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; ſome againſt his truth, as diſtruſting his promiſe, or not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity againſt this, which is the peculiar glory of the deity. Every one of them is a receding from the divine image; and the blackneſs of every one is the deeper, by how much the diſtance of it from the holineſs of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holineſs of God is the cauſe of all the abſolute atheiſm (if there be any ſuch) in the world; what was the reaſon *the fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God?* but becauſe the fool is corrupt and hath done abominable works. If they believe the being of a God, their own reaſon will inforce them to imagine him holy: therefore rather then fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.

The holineſs of God is injured, when men will put up petitions to God to favour them in a wicked deſign.—Such there are, and taxed by the apoſtle, James iv. 3, *Ye aſk amiſs, that you may conſume it upon your luſts:* who deſired mercies from God, with an intent to make them inſtruments of ſin, and weapons of unrighteouſneſs; as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the ſucceſs of his robbery. It hath not been rare in the world to appoint faſts and prayers for ſucceſs in wars manifeſtly unjuſt, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to proſper them in their unjuſt gain; as if the bleſſed God ſat in his pure majeſty upon a throne of grace, to eſpouſe unjuſt practices, and make iniquity proſperous. There are ſuch as *offer ſacrifices with an evil mind,*

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to barter with God for a divine bleſſing to ſpirit a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holineſs of God is this? How inexcuſable would it be for a favourite to addreſs himſelf to a juſt prince with this language? Sir, I deſire a boon of ſuch lands that lie near me, for an addition to my eſtate, that I may have ſupports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbours. Hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to ſuch crimes and wickedneſs he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men's hearts in the immediate preſence of God? The order of prayer runs thus, *Hallowed be thy name*; firſt to have a deep ſenſe of the holineſs of the divine nature, and an ardent deſire for the glory of it: this order is inverted by aſking thoſe things which are not agreeable to the will of God; not meet for us to aſk, nor meet for God to give; or aſking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention: this is, in effect, to deſire God to ſtrip himſelf of his holineſs, and commit ſacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our luſts.

The purity of God is contemned, in hating and ſcoffing at the holineſs which is in a creature. Whoever looks upon the holineſs of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableneſs of divine purity. Whoſoever hates thoſe qualities and graces that reſemble God in any perſon, muſt needs contemn the original pattern, which is more eminent in God. If there be no comelineſs in the creature's holineſs, to render it grateful to us, we ſhould ſay of God himſelf, were he viſible among us, with thoſe in the prophet, Iſa. liii. *There is no beauty in him that we ſhould deſire him:* Holineſs is beautiful in itſelf. If God be the moſt lovely being, that which is a likeneſs to him, ſo far as it doth reſemble him, muſt needs be amiable, becauſe it partakes of God: and therefore thoſe that ſee no beauty in an inferior holineſs,

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but contemn it becauſe it is a purity above them, contemn God much more: he that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect, without any mixture or ſtain. Holineſs being the glory of God; the peculiar title of the deity, and from him derived unto the nature of a creature; he that mocks this in a perſon, derides God himſelf; and when he cannot abuſe the purity in the deity, he will do it in his image. As rebels that cannot wrong the king in his perſon, will do it in his picture, and his ſubjects that are loyal to him: he that hates the picture of a man, hates the perſon repreſented by it much more; he that hates the beams, hates the ſun; the holineſs of a creature is but a beam from that infinite ſun, a ſtream from that eternal fountain. Where there is a deriſion of the purity of any creature, there is a greater reflection upon God in that deriſion, as he is the author of it. If a mixed and ſtained holineſs be more the ſubject of any man's ſcoffs than a great deal of ſin, that perſon hath a diſpoſition more roundly to ſcoff at God himſelf, ſhould he appear in that unblemiſhed and unſpotted purity which infinitely ſhines in his nature. O! it is a dangerous thing to ſcoff and deride holineſs in any perſon, though never ſo mean; ſuch do deride and ſcoff at the moſt holy God.

2. The holineſs of God is injured by our unprepared addreſſes to him, when like ſwine, we come into the preſence of God with all our mire reeking and ſteeming upon us.—A holy God requires a holy worſhip: and if our beſt duties, having filth in every part, as performed by us, are unmeet for God; how much more unſuitable are dead and dirty duties to a living and immenſe holineſs? Slight approaches and droſſy frames ſpeak us to have imaginations of God as of a ſlight and ſottiſh being: this is worſe than the heathens practiſed, who would purge their fleſh before they ſacrificed,

ſacrificed, and make ſome preparations in a ſeeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is ſo holy, that were our ſervices as refined as thoſe of angels, we could not preſent him with a ſervice meet for his holy nature. We contemn then this perfection when we come before him without due preparation; as if God himſelf were of an impure nature, and did not deſerve our pureſt thoughts in our applications to them; as if any blemiſhed and polluted ſacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deſerved no better. When we excite not thoſe elevated frames of ſpirit which are due to ſuch a being; when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect ſervice, we worſhip him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a ſlight upon his majeſtic ſanctity: when we nouriſh in our duties thoſe fooliſh imaginations which creep upon us; when we bring into, and continue our worldly, carnal, debauched fancies in his preſence, worſe than the naſty ſervants, or bemired dogs, a man would bluſh to be attended with in his viſits to a neat perſon. To be converſing with ſordid ſenſualities, when we are at the feet of an infinite God, ſitting upon the throne of his holineſs, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a veſſel full of naſty dung with us, when we come to preſent a petition to him clothed in his royal robes. Or as it would have been to God, if the high prieſt ſhould have ſwept all the blood and excrements of the ſacrifices from the foot of the altar into the holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy ſeat, where the preſence of God dwelled between the cherubims, and afterwards ſhoveled it up into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

God's holineſs is ſlighted in depending upon our imperfect ſervices to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary: the Jews were often infected with it, who not well underſtanding the enormity

enormity of their tranſgreſſions, the interweaving of ſin with their ſervices, and the unſpottedneſs of the divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their ſacrifices, and thought by the cutting the throat of a beaſt, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a ſufficient compenſation to that holineſs they had offended. Not to ſpeak of many among the Romaniſts, who have the ſame notion, thinking to make ſatisfaction to God, by erecting an hoſpital, or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purſes, and the offering of an unjuſt mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they have done him, than contribute to the appeaſing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miſerable men, whoſe conſciences accuſe them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumbling of a few formal prayers, and in the ſtrength of them to think to ſtand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a diſcharge upon this account from any accuſation this divine perfection can preſent againſt them? Nay, do not the beſt chriſtians ſometimes find a principle in them, that makes them ſtumble in their goings forth to Chriſt, and glorifying the holineſs of God in that method which he hath appointed? Sometimes caſting an eye at their grace, and ſticking awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple-building, while they ſhould more admire the glorious preſence that fills it. What is all this but a vilifying of the holineſs of the divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, becauſe they look like a righteouſneſs in our eſtimation? As though droſs and dung, which are the titles the apoſtle gives to all the righteouſneſs of a fallen creature, were valuable in the ſight of God, and ſufficient to render us comely before him. It is a blaſphemy againſt this attribute, to pretend that any thing ſo imperfect, ſo daubed, as the beſt of our ſervices are, can

anſwer to that which is infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life: it is at beſt to ſet up a gilded dagon as a fit companion for the ark of his holineſs; our own righteouſneſs as a ſuitable mate for the righteouſneſs of God: as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holineſs of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature. Rude and fooliſh notions of the divine purity, are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteouſneſs of our own, though never ſo ſplendid. It is a rendering the righteouſneſs of God, as dull and obſcure as that of men; a mere out-ſide, as their own: as blind as the heathens pictured their fortune, that knew as little how to diſcern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to diſtribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them, to have a dog or a lamb preſented in ſacrifice. As if God did not well underſtand his own nature, when he enacted ſo holy a law, and ſtrengthened it with ſo ſevere a threatening; which muſt follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteouſneſs lower than that, which bears ſome ſuitableneſs to the holineſs of his own nature, and that of his law; and that he could eaſily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit ſervice. What are the ſervices of the generality of men, but ſuppoſitions, that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their ſins, and by an oral ſacrifice, cauſe him to diveſt himſelf of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practices. As the harlot, that would return freſh to her uncleanneſs, upon the confidence that her peac-eofferings had contented the righteouſneſs of God: as though a ſmall ſervice could make him wink at our ſins, and lay aſide the glory of his nature; when alas, the beſt duties in the moſt gracious perſons in this life, are but as the ſteams of a ſpiced dunghill, a compoſition of myrrh and froth, ſince there are ſwarms

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of corruptions in their nature, and ſecret ſins that they need a cleanſing from.

3. All unholineſs is vile and oppoſite to the nature of God.—It is ſuch a loathſome thing, that the *purity of God's eye is averſe from beholding*, Hab. i. 3. It is not ſaid there, that he *will not*, but he *cannot* look on evil; there cannot be any amicableneſs between God and ſin, the natures of both are ſo directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holineſs is the life of God, it endures as long as his life; he muſt be eternally averſe from ſin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he ſhould for one inſtant ceaſe to hate it, he would ceaſe to live. To be a holy God is as eſſential to him, as to be a living God; and he would not be a living, but a dead God, if he were in the leaſt point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on ſin but his heart riſeth againſt it: it muſt needs be moſt odious to him, as that which is againſt the glory of his nature, and directly oppoſite to that which is the luſtre and varniſh of all his other perfections. It is the *abominable thing which his ſoul hates*, Jer. xliv. 4: the vileſt terms imaginable are uſed to ſignify it: do you underſtand the loathſomeneſs of a miry ſwine, or the nauſeouſneſs of the vomit of a dog? Theſe are emblems of ſin. Can you endure the ſteams of putrified carcaſſes from an open ſepulchre? Is the ſmell of the ſtinking ſweat or excrements of a body delightful? or is the ſight of a body, overgrown with ſcabs and leproſy, grateful to you? So vile, ſo odious is ſin in the ſight of God. It is no light thing then to fly in the face of God, to break his eternal law, to daſh both the tables in pieces, to trample the tranſcript of God's own nature under our feet, to cheriſh that which is inconſiſtent with his honour, to lift up our heels againſt the glory of his nature, to join iſſue with the devil in ſtabbing his heart, and depriving him

of his life. Sin in every part of it is an oppoſition to the holineſs of God, and conſequently an envying him a being and life, as well as a glory. If ſin be ſuch a thing, ye that love the Lord, hate evil.

4. Sin cannot eſcape a due puniſhment.—A hatred of unrighteouſneſs, and conſequently a will to puniſh it, is as eſſential to God as a love of righteouſneſs. Since he is not as an heathen idol, but hath eyes to ſee, and purity to hate every iniquity, he will have an infinite juſtice to puniſh whatſoever is againſt infinite holineſs. As he loves every thing that is amiable, ſo he loathes every thing that is filthy, and that conſtantly without any change; his whole nature is ſet againſt it, he abhors nothing but this. It is not the devil's knowledge or activity that his hatred is terminated in, but the malice and unholineſs of his nature; this only is the object of his ſeverity: it is in the recompence of this only, that there can be a manifeſtation of his juſtice.

5. There is therefore a neceſſity of the ſatisfaction of the holineſs of God by ſome ſufficient mediator. —The divine purity could not meet with any acquieſcence in all mankind after the fall: ſin was hated, the ſinner would be ruined, unleſs ſome way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holineſs of God; either the ſinner muſt be condemned for ever, or ſome ſatisfaction muſt be made, that the holineſs of the divine nature might eternally appear in its full luſtre. That it is eſſential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteouſneſs, as that which is abſolutely repugnant to his nature, none do queſtion. That the juſtice of God is ſo eſſential to him, as that ſin could not be pardoned without ſatisfaction, ſome do queſtion; though this latter ſeems rationally to follow upon the former. That holineſs is eſſential to the nature of God is evident, becauſe elſe God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating

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the ſun and ſtars. No man can in his right wits frame a right notion of a deity, without purity. It would be a leſs blaſphemy againſt the excellency of God, to conceit him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy: and for the eſſentialneſs of his juſtice, Joſhua joins both his holineſs and his jealouſy as going hand in hand together, Joſh. xxiv. 19. *He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your ſin.*

But conſider only the purity of God, ſince it is contrary to ſin, and conſequently hating the ſinner; the guilty perſon cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holineſs of God have any complacency in a filthy perſon, but as fire hath in ſtubble, to conſume it. How the holy God ſhould be brought to delight in man without a *ſalvo* for the rights of his holineſs, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be aboliſhed; that would reflect indeed upon the righteouſneſs of the law-giver; to aboliſh it becauſe of ſin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature: muſt he change his holineſs for the ſake of that which was againſt his holineſs, in a compliance with a prophane and unrighteous creature? This ſhould engage him rather to maintain his law, than to null it. And to abrogate his law as ſoon as he had enacted it, ſince ſin ſtept into the world preſently after it, would be no credit to his wiſdom.

There muſt be a reparation made of the honour of God's holineſs; by ourſelves it could not be without condemnation: by another it could not be without a ſufficiency in the perſon: no creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compenſation for the diſparagements of infinite holineſs. He muſt have deſpicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and the glavering fawnings at the death of a creature, can be ſufficient to repair the wrongs, and reſtore the rights of this

attribute. It muſt therefore be ſuch a compenſation as might be commenſurate to the holineſs of the divine nature and the divine law, which could not be wrought by any, but him that was poſſeſſed of a godhead, to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The perſon deſigned and appointed by God for ſo great an affair, was *one in the form of God, one equal with God,* Phil. ii. 6. who could not be termed by ſuch a title of dignity, if he had not been equal to God in the univerſal rectitude of the divine nature, and therefore in his holineſs. The puniſhment due to ſin is tranſlated to that perſon for the righting divine holineſs, and the righteouſneſs of that perſon is communicated to the ſinner for the pardon of the offending creature.

If the ſinner had been eternally damned, God's hatred of ſin had been evidenced by the ſtrokes of his juſtice; but his mercy to a ſinner had lain in obſcurity. If the ſinner had been pardoned and ſaved without ſuch a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holineſs had hid its head for ever in his own boſom. There was therefore a neceſſity of ſuch a way to manifeſt his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy: that mercy might not always ſigh for the deſtruction of the creature, and that holineſs might not mourn for the neglect of its honour.

6. Hence it will follow, there is no juſtification of a ſinner by any thing in himſelf.—After ſin had ſet foot in the world, man could preſent nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holineſs of his law, till God ſet forth a perſon, upon whoſe account the acceptation of our perſons and ſervices is founded, Eph. i. 6, *Who hath made us accepted in the beloved.* The infinite purity of God is ſo glorious, that it ſhames the holineſs of angels, as the light of the ſun dims the light of the fire: much more will the righteouſneſs of fallen man, who is vile, and drinks up iniquity like water, vaniſh into nothing in his preſence. With what ſelf-abaſement and abhorrence

rence ought he to be poſſeſſed that comes as ſhort of the angels in purity, as a dung-hill doth of a ſtar? The higheſt obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, ſince lapſed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or ſtand before ſo exact an inquiſition. What perſon hath ſuch a clear innocence, and unſpotted obedience in ſuch a perfection, as in any degree to ſuit the holineſs of the divine nature? Pſa. cxliii. 2, *Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified.* If God ſhould debate the caſe ſimply with man in his own perſon, without reſpecting the mediator, he were not able to anſwer one of a thouſand. Though we are his ſervants, as David was, and perform a ſincere ſervice, yet there are many little motes and duſt of ſin in the beſt works, that cannot lie undiſcovered from the eye of his holineſs: and if we come ſhort in the leaſt of what the law requires, we are guilty of all. So that *in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified:* in the ſight of thy infinite holineſs, which hates the leaſt ſpot; in the ſight of thy infinite juſtice, which puniſhes the leaſt tranſgreſſion.

God would deſcend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and purity, ſhould he accept that for a righteouſneſs and holineſs which is not ſo in itſelf; and nothing is ſo, which hath the leaſt ſtain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The moſt holy ſaints in ſcripture, upon a proſpect of his purity, have caſt away all confidence in themſelves; every flaſh of the divine purity has ſtruck them into a deep ſenſe of their own impurity and ſhame for it, Job xlii. 6, *Wherefore I abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes.* What can the language of any man be that lies under a ſenſe of infinite holineſs and his own defilement in the leaſt, but that of the prophet, Iſa. vi. 5, *Wo is me, I am undone?* And what is there in the world can adminiſter any other thought than this, unleſs God be conſidered in

Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf? As a holy God, ſo righted, as that he can diſpenſe with the condemnation of a ſinner, without diſpenſing with his hatred of ſin; pardoning the ſin in the criminal, becauſe it hath been puniſhed in the ſurety. That righteouſneſs which God hath ſet forth for juſtification, is not our own, but a *righteouſneſs which is of God*, Phil. iii. 9, 10, of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father. A righteouſneſs ſurmounting that of all the glorious angels, ſince it is an immutable one which can never fail, an everlaſting righteouſneſs, Dan. ix. 24. A righteouſneſs wherein the holineſs of God can acquieſce, as conſidered in itſelf, becauſe it is a righteouſneſs of one equal with God. As we therefore diſhonour the divine majeſty, when we inſiſt upon our own bemired righteouſneſs for our juſtification; (as if a *mortal man were as juſt as God*, and a *man as pure as his maker*, Job iv. 17.) So we highly honour the purity of his nature, when we charge ourſelves with folly, acknowledge ourſelves unclean, and accept of that righteouſneſs which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no juſtification of a ſinner by any thing in himſelf.

7. It informs us, if holineſs be a glorious perfection of the divine nature, then the deity of Chriſt might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of the *Holy One*, Acts iii. 14, 16; a title often given to God in the old teſtament; and he is called *The Holy of Holies*, Dan. ix. 24, but becauſe the angels ſeemed to be termed *holy ones*, Dan. iv. 13, 17, and the moſt ſacred place in the temple was alſo called the *holy of holies*, I ſhall not inſiſt upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as *holy*; when this perfection of the divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together

gether, and aſcribed to him. Iſa. vi. 3, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hoſts, and the whole earth is full of his glory*, which the apoſtle interprets of Chriſt, John xii. 39, 41. Iſaiah again, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they ſhould not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their hearts, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them. Theſe things ſaid Iſaiah, when he ſaw his glory, and ſpake of him.* He that Iſaiah ſaw environed with the ſeraphims in a reverential poſture before his face, and praiſed as moſt holy by them, was the true and eternal God; ſuch acclamations belong to none, but the great Jehovah, God bleſſed for ever: but, ſaith John, it was the glory of Chriſt that Iſaiah ſaw in this viſion; Chriſt therefore is *God bleſſed for ever*, of whom it was ſaid, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hoſts.* The evangeliſt had been ſpeaking of Chriſt, the miracles which he wrought, the obſtinacy of the Jews againſt believing on him; his glory therefore is to be referred to the ſubject he had been ſpeaking of. The evangeliſt was not ſpeaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites thoſe words out of Iſaiah; not to teach any thing of the Father, but to ſhew that the Jews could not believe in Chriſt. He ſpeaks of him that had wrought ſo many miracles; but Chriſt wrought thoſe miracles: he ſpeaks of him whom the Jews refuſed to believe on; but Chriſt was the perſon they would not believe on, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of this perſon Iſaiah ſaw, and this perſon Iſaiah ſpake of, if the words of the evangeliſt be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

8. If holineſs be an eminent perfection of the divine nature, the chriſtian religion is of a divine extraction—It diſcovers the holineſs of God and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a proſpect of his nature, repreſents him in the beauty of holineſs, Pſa. cx. 3. more than the whole

whole glaſs of the creation. It is in the evangelical glaſs the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable. It is a doctrine *according to godlineſs*, 1 Tim. vi. 3, directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our firſt creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourſelves, fixeth us upon a noble end, points our actions and the ſcope of our lives to God. It quells the monſters of ſin, diſcountenanceth the motes of wickedneſs; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it ſets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holineſs of the divine majeſty. God is exalted upon the throne of his holineſs in it, and the creature advanced to an image and reſemblance of it, 1 Pet. i. 16, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

God's Goodneſs.

Mark x. 18.

AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, WHY CALLEST THOU ME GOOD? THERE IS NONE GOOD BUT ONE, THAT IS GOD.

THE obſervation that I intend to proſecute is this; that pure and perfect goodneſs is only the royal prerogative of God; goodneſs is a choice perfection of the divine nature.

This is the true and genuine character of God; he is good, he is goodneſs, good in himſelf, good in his eſſence, good in the higheſt degree, poſſeſſing whatſoever is comely, excellent, deſirable; the higheſt good, becauſe the firſt good; whatſoever is perfect goodneſs, is GOD; whatſoever is truly goodneſs in any creature, is a reſemblance of God. All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. All gifts, all variety of goodneſs, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cauſe of all good, by an over-flowing goodneſs of his nature; he refers all things to himſelf as the end, for the repreſentation of his own goodneſs; *Truly God is good.* Certainly it is an undoubted truth, it is written in his works of nature; and his acts of grace, *He is abundant in goodneſs.*

In

In the profecution of this let us fee,

1. What this goodneſs is.
2. Some propoſitions concerning the nature of it.
3. That God is good.
4. The manifeſtation of it in creation, providence, and redemption.
5. The uſe.

Firſt, What this goodneſs is?—There is a goodneſs of being, which is the natural perfection of a thing; there is the goodneſs of will, which is the holineſs, and righteouſneſs of a perſon; there is the goodneſs of the hand, which we call liberality, or beneficence, a doing good to others.

We mean not by this, the goodneſs of his eſſence, or the perfection of his nature.—God is thus good, becauſe his nature is infinitely perfect, he hath all things requiſite to the completeing of a moſt perfect and ſovereign being. All good meets in his eſſence as all water meets in the ocean. Under this notion all the attributes of God, which are requiſite to ſo illuſtrious a being, are comprehended. All things that are, have a goodneſs of being in them, derived to them by the power of God, as they are creatures; ſo the devil is good, as he is a creature of God's making: he hath a natural goodneſs, but not a moral goodneſs: when he fell from God, he retained his natural goodneſs as a creature; becauſe he did not ceaſe to be, he was not reduced to that nothing, from whence he was drawn; but he ceaſed to be morally good, being ſtripped of his righteouſneſs by his apoſtacy; as a creature he was God's work, as a creature he remains ſtill God's work, and therefore as a creature remains ſtill good, in regard of his created being. The more of being any thing hath, the more of this ſort of natural goodneſs it hath; and ſo the devil hath more of this natural goodneſs than men have; becauſe he hath more marks of the excellency of God upon him, in regard of the greatneſs of his knowledge, and the

the extent of his power, the largeneſs of his capacity, and the acuteneſs of his underſtanding, which are natural perfections belonging to the nature of an angel; though he hath loſt his moral perfections. God is ſovereignly, and infinitely good in this ſort of goodneſs. He is unſearchably perfect, nothing is wanting to his eſſence, that is neceſſary to the perfection of it; yet this is not that which the ſcripture expreſſeth under the term of goodneſs, but a perfection of God's nature as related to us, and which he poureth forth upon all his creatures, as goodneſs which flows from this natural perfection of the deity.

By goodneſs is meant the bounty of God. This is the notion of goodneſs in the world; when we ſay a good man, we mean either a holy man in his life, or a charitable and liberal man in the management of his goods. A righteous man, and a good man are diſtinguiſhed. For ſcarcely for a a righteous man will one die; yet for a good man one would even dare to die. For an innocent man, one as innocent of the crime as himſelf would ſcarce venture his life; but for a good man, a liberal tender-hearted man, that had been a common good in the place where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit as life itſelf amounts to, a man out of gratitude might dare to die. The goodneſs of God is his inclination to deal well and bountifully with his creatures. It is that whereby he wills, there ſhould be ſomething beſides himſelf for his own glory. God is good in himſelf, and to himſelf, *i. e.* highly amiable to himſelf; and therefore ſome define it a perfection of God, whereby he loves himſelf and his own excellency; but as it ſtands in relation to his creatures, it is that perfection of God, whereby he delights in his works, and is beneficial to them. God is the higheſt goodneſs, becauſe he doth not act for his own profit, but for his creatures welfare, and the manifeſtation of his own goodneſs.

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He ſends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himſelf, or ſubſtantial advantage from his creatures. It is from this perfection that he loves whatſoever is good, and that is, whatſoever he hath made, *for every creature of God is good*; every creature hath ſome communications from him, which cannot be without ſome affection to them; every creature hath a footſtep of divine goodneſs upon it; God therefore loves that goodneſs in the creature, elſe he would not love himſelf. God hates no creature, no not the devils, and damned, as creatures; he is not an enemy to them, as they are the works of his hands: he is properly an enemy, that doth ſimply and abſolutely wiſh evil to another; but God doth not abſolutely wiſh evil to the damned; that juſtice that he inflicts upon them, the deſerved puniſhment of their ſin, is part of his goodneſs, (as ſhall afterwards be ſhewn.)

This is the moſt pleaſing perfection of the divine nature; his creating power amazes us, his conducting wiſdom aſtoniſheth us, his goodneſs, as furniſhing us with all conveniencies, delights us, and renders both his amazing power, and aſtoniſhing wiſdom delightful to us.

As the ſun by affecting things, is an emblem of God's power, by diſcovering things to us, is an emblem of his wiſdom, but by refreſhing and comforting us, is an emblem of his goodneſs; and without this refreſhing virtue it communicates to us, we ſhould take no pleaſure in the creatures it produceth, nor in the beauties it diſcovers. As God is great and powerful, he is the object of our underſtanding; but as good and bountiful, he is the object of our love and deſire.

The goodneſs of God comprehends all his attributes.—All the acts of God are nothing elſe but the effluxes of his goodneſs, diſtinguiſhed by ſeveral names, according to the objects it is exerciſed about. As the ſea, though it be one maſs of water, yet we diſtinguiſh

diſtinguiſh it by ſeveral names, according to the ſhores it waſheth, and beats upon, as the Britiſh and German ocean, though all be one ſea. When Moſes longed to ſee his glory, God tells him, he would give him a proſpect of his goodneſs; *I will make all my goodneſs to paſs before thee.* His goodneſs is his glory and godhead, as much as is delightfully viſible to his creatures, and whereby he doth benefit man; I will cauſe my goodneſs, or comelineſs, as Calvin renders it, to paſs before thee; what is this, but the train of all his lovely perfections ſpringing from his goodneſs? The whole catalogue of mercy, grace, long-ſuffering, abundance of truth, ſummed up in this word. All are ſtreams from this fountain; he could be none of this, were he not firſt good. When he confers happineſs without merit, it is grace; when he beſtows happineſs againſt merit, it is mercy; when he bears with provoking rebels, it is long ſuffering; when he performs his promiſe, it is truth; when he meets with a perſon, to whom he is not obliged, it is grace; when he meets with a perſon in the world, to which he hath obliged himſelf by promiſe, it is truth; when he commiſerates a diſtreſſed perſon, it is pity; when he ſupplies an indigent perſon, it is bounty; when he ſuccours an innocent perſon, it is righteouſneſs, and when he pardons a penitent perſon, it is mercy; all ſummed up in this one name of goodneſs: and the pſalmiſt expreſſeth the ſame ſentiment in the ſame words: *They ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs. The Lord is gracious and full of compaſſion, ſlow to anger, and of great mercy: the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.* He is firſt good, and then compaſſionate. Righteouſneſs is often in ſcripture taken, not for juſtice, but charitableneſs: this attribute, ſaith one, is ſo full of God, that it doth defy all the reſt, and verify the adorableneſs of him. His wiſdom might contrive againſt us, his power bear too

hard

hard upon us; one might be too hard for an ignorant, and the other too mighty for an impotent creature; his holineſs would ſcare an impure and guilty creature, but his goodneſs conducts them all for us, and makes them all amiable to us; whatever comelineſs they have in the eye of a creature, whatever comfort they afford to the heart of a creature, we are obliged for all to his goodneſs. This puts all the reſt upon a delightful exerciſe, this makes his wiſdom deſign for us, and this makes his power to act for us: this veils his holineſs from affrighting us, and this ſpirits his mercy to relieve us: all his acts towards man, are but the workmanſhip of this. What moved him at firſt to create the world out of nothing, and erect ſo noble a creature as man, endowed with ſuch excellent gifts; was it not his goodneſs? What made him ſeparate his Son to be a ſacrifice for us, after we had endeavoured to raſe out the firſt marks of his favor; was it not a ſtrong bubbling of goodneſs? What moves him, to reduce a fallen creature to the due ſenſe of his duty, and at laſt bring him to an eternal felicity; is it not only his goodneſs? this is the captain attribute that leads the reſt to act. This attends them, and ſpirits them in all his ways of acting. This is the complement and perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, which ſet all the reſt on work, nothing of his wonders had been ſeen in creation, nothing of his compaſſions had been ſeen in redemption.

Secondly, Some propoſitions to explain the nature of this goodneſs.

1. He is good by his own eſſence.—God is not only good in his eſſence, but good by his eſſence: the eſſence of every created thing is good, ſo the unerring God pronounced every thing which he had made. The eſſence of the worſt creatures, yea, of the impure and ſavage devils is good but they are not good, *per eſſentiam*, for then they could not be bad, malicious and oppreſſive. God is good as he is God,

God, and therefore good by himſelf, and from himſelf, not by participation from another; he made every thing good, but none made him good: ſince his goodneſs was not received from another, he is good by his own nature. He could not receive it from the things he created, they are later than he: ſince they received all from him, they could beſtow nothing on him, and no God preceded him, in whoſe inheritance and treaſures of goodneſs, he could be a ſucceſſor: He is abſolutely his own goodneſs, he needed none to make him good; but all things needed him, to be good by him. Creatures are good by being made ſo by him, and cleaving to him: He is good without cleaving to any goodneſs without him. Goodneſs is not a quality in him, but a nature, not a habit added to his eſſence, but his eſſence itſelf; he is not firſt God, and then afterwards good, but he is good as he is God, his eſſence being one and the ſame, is formally and equally God and good. Good of himſelf, was one of the names the Platoniſts gave him. He is eſſentially good in his own nature, and not by any outward action which follows his eſſence. He is an independent being, and hath nothing of goodneſs or happineſs from any thing without him, or any thing he doth act about. If he were not good by his eſſence, he could not be eternally good; he could not be the firſt good; he would have ſomething before him, from whence he derived that goodneſs, wherewith he is poſſeſſed; nor could he be perfectly good, for he could not be equally good to that, from whom he derived his goodneſs: no ſtar, no ſplendid body that derives light from the ſun, doth equal that ſun by which it is enlightened.

Hence his goodneſs muſt be infinite, and circumſcribed by no limits: the exerciſe of his goodneſs may be limitted by himſelf, but his goodneſs, the principle, cannot; for ſince his eſſence is infinite, and his goodneſs is not diſtinguiſhed from his eſ-

ſence, it is infinite alſo; if it were limitted, it were finite; he cannot be bounded by any thing without him; if ſo, then he were not God, becauſe he would have ſomething ſuperior to him, to put bars in his way; if there were any thing to fix him, it muſt be a good or evil being; good it cannot be, for it is the property of goodneſs to encourage goodneſs, not to bound it; evil it cannot be, for then it would extinguiſh goodneſs, as well as limit it; it would not be content with the circumſcribing it, without deſtroying it; for it is the nature of every contrary, to endeavour the deſtruction of its oppoſite. He is eſſentially good by his own eſſence, therefore good of himſelf, therefore eternally good, and abundantly good.

2. God is the prime and chief goodneſs.—Being good, *per ſe*, and by his own eſſence, he muſt needs be the chief goodneſs, in whom there can be nothing but good, from whom there can proceed nothing but good, to whom all good whatſoever muſt be referred as the final cauſe of all good. As he is the chief being, ſo he is the chief good. And as we riſe by ſteps from the exiſtence of created things, to acknowledge one ſupreme being, which is God; ſo we mount by ſteps from the conſideration of the goodneſs of created things, to acknowledge one infinite ocean of ſovereign goodneſs, whence the ſtreams of created goodneſs are derived. When we behold things that partake of goodneſs from another, we muſt acquieſce in one that hath goodneſs by participation from no other, but originally from himſelf, and therefore ſupremely in himſelf above all other things. So that as nothing greater and more majeſtic can be imagined, ſo alſo nothing better and more excellent can be conceived than God. Nothing can add to him, or make him better than he is, nothing can detract from him, to make him worſe, nothing can be added to him, nothing can be ſevered from him, no created good can render him more excellent; no evil from any creature, can

can render him leſs excellent. Our goodneſs extends not to him; wickedneſs may hurt a man, as we are, and our righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man, but if we be righteous, what give we to him, or what receives he at our hands? As he hath no ſuperior in place above him, ſo being chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any, that hath from himſelf, all he hath? The goodneſs of a creature may be changed, but the goodneſs of a Creator is immutable; he is always like himſelf, ſo good that he cannot be evil, as he is ſo bleſſed, that he cannot be miſerable.

Nothing is good but God, becauſe nothing is of itſelf but God: as all things being from nothing, are nothing in compariſon of God, ſo all things being from nothing, are ſcanty and evil in compariſon of God. If any thing had been *ex Deo*, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God is; but ſince the principle whence all things were drawn, was nothing, though the efficient cauſe by which they were extracted from nothing was God, they are as nothing in goodneſs, and not eſteemable in compariſon of God. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.* God is all good, every creature hath a diſtinct variety of goodneſs. God diſtinctly pronounced every day's work in the creation good. Food communicates the goodneſs of its nouriſhing virtue to our bodies, flowers the goodneſs of their odors to our ſmell, every creature a goodneſs of comlineſs to our ſight; plants the goodneſs of healing qualities for our cure. And all derive from themſelves a goodneſs of knowledge, objectively to our underſtandings. The ſun by one ſort of goodneſs warms us, metals enrich us, living creatures ſuſtain us, and delight us by another; all thoſe have diſtinct kinds of goodneſs, which are eminently ſummed up in God, and are all but parts of his immenſe goodneſs. It is he that enlightens

us by his ſun, nouriſheth us by bread. *It is not by bread alone, that we live, but by the word of God.* It is all but his own ſupreme goodneſs, conveyed ſo us through thoſe varieties of conduit-pipes. God is all good, other things are good in their kind, as a good man, a good angel, a good tree, a good plant; but God hath a good of all kinds eminently in his nature. He is no leſs all good, than he is almighty, and all knowing: as the ſun contains in it all the light, and more light than is in all the cleareſt bodies in the world; ſo doth God contain in himſelf all the good, and more good than is in the richeſt creatures. Nothing is good, but as it reſembles him; as nothing is hot, but as it reſembles fire, the prime ſubject of heat.

God is omnipotent, therefore no good can be wanting to him. If he were deſtitute of any which he could not have, he were not almighty: he is ſo good that there is no mixture of any thing, which can be called not good in him; every thing beſides him wants ſome good, which others have. Nothing can be ſo evil as God is good. There can be no evil, but there is ſome mixture of good with it. No nature ſo evil, but there is ſome ſpark of goodneſs in it: but God is a good which hath no taint of evil; nothing can be ſo ſupreme an evil, as God is ſupreme goodneſs.

He is only good without capacity of increaſe: he is all good, and unmixedly good; none good but God. A goodneſs like the ſun, that hath all light, and no darkneſs. That is the ſecond thing, he is the ſupreme and chief goodneſs.

3. This goodneſs is communicative.—None ſo communicatively good as God. As the notion of God includes goodneſs, ſo the notion of goodneſs includes diffuſiveneſs; without goodneſs he would ceaſe to be a deity, and without diffuſiveneſs he would ceaſe to be good. The being good is neceſſary to the being God: for goodneſs is nothing elſe

in the notion of it, but a ſtrong inclination to do good; either to find, or make an object, wherein to exerciſe itſelf, according to the propenſion of its own nature; and it is an inclination of communicating itſelf, not for its own intereſt, but the good of the object it pitcheth upon. Thus God is good by nature, and his nature is not without activity, he acts conveniently to his own nature. *Thou art good, and doſt good.* And nothing accrues to him, by the communications of himſelf to others, ſince his bleſſedneſs was as great before the frame of any creature, as ever it was ſince the erecting of the world; ſo that the goodneſs of Chriſt himſelf encreaſeth not the luſtre of his happineſs: *My goodneſs extends not to thee.* He is not of a niggardly and envious nature; he is too rich to have any cauſe to envy, and too good to have any will to envy: he is as liberal as he is rich, according to the capacity of the object about which his goodneſs is exerciſed. The divine goodneſs being the ſupreme goodneſs, is goodneſs in the higheſt degree of activity; not an idle, encloſed, pent-up goodneſs, as a ſpring ſhut up, or a fountain ſealed, bubbling up within itſelf, but bubbling out of itſelf. A fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation; *He is an ointment poured forth:* nothing ſpreads itſelf more than oil, and takes up a larger ſpace, whereſoever it drops. It may be no leſs ſaid of the goodneſs of God, as it is of the fulneſs of Chriſt, *He fills all in all:* he fills rational creatures with underſtanding, ſenſitive nature with vigor and motion, the whole world with beauty and ſweetneſs. Every taſte, every touch of a creature, is a taſte and touch of divine goodneſs. Divine goodneſs offers itſelf in one ſpark in this creature, in another ſpark in the other creature, and altogether make up a goodneſs inconceivable by any creature. The whole maſs and extracted ſpirit of it is infinitely ſhort of the

goodneſs of the divine nature, imperfect ſhadows of that goodneſs which is in himſelf.

4. God is neceſſarily good.—None is neceſſarily good but God; he is as neceſſarily good, as he is neceſſarily God. His goodneſs is as inſeparable from his nature as his holineſs. He is good by nature, not only by will; as he is holy by nature, not only by will; he is good in his nature, and good in his actions; and as he cannot be bad in his nature, ſo he cannot be bad in his communications: he can no more act contrary to this goodneſs in any of his actions, than he can un-god himſelf. It is not neceſſary that God ſhould create a world; he was at his own choice whether he would create or no: but when he reſolves to make a world, it is neceſſary that he ſhould make it good, becauſe he is goodneſs itſelf, and cannot act againſt his own nature. He could not create any thing without goodneſs in the very act: the very act of creation, or communicating being to any thing without himſelf, is in itſelf an act of goodneſs, as well as an act of power: had he not been good in himſelf, nothing could have been endued with any goodnſes by him. In the act of giving being, he is liberal, the being he beſtows is a diſplaying his own liberality: he could not confer what he needs not, and which could not be deſerved, without being bountiful. Since what was nothing, could not merit to be brought into being, the very act of giving to nothing a being, was an act of choice goodneſs.

He could not create any thing without goodneſs as the motive, and the neceſſary motive: his goodneſs could not neceſſitate him to make the world, but his goodneſs could only move him to reſolve to make a world; he was not bound to erect and faſhion it, becauſe of his goodneſs, but he could not frame it without his goodneſs as the moving cauſe.

He could not create any thing, but he muſt create it good. It had been inconſiſtent with the ſupreme

ſupreme goodneſs of his nature, to have created only murderous, ravenous, injurious creatures: to have created a bedlam rather than a world. A mere heap of confuſion would have been as inconſiſtent with his divine goodneſs, as with his divine wiſdom.

Again, when his goodneſs had moved him to make a creature, his goodneſs would neceſſarily move him to be beneficial to his creature; not that this neceſſity reſults from any merit in the creature, which he had framed; but from the excellency and diffuſiveneſs of his own nature, and his own glory, the end for which he formed it, which would have been obſcure, yea, nothing, without ſome degrees of his bounty. What occaſion of acknowledgements and praiſe could the creature have for its being, if God had given him only a miſerable being, while it was innocent in action? The goodneſs of God would not ſuffer him to make a creature, without providing conveniences for it, ſo long as he thought good to maintain its being, and furniſhing it with that which was neceſſary to anſwer the end for which he created it; and his own nature would not ſuffer him to be unkind to his rational creature, while it was innocent. It had been injuſtice to inflict evil upon the creature, that had not offended, and had no relation to an offending creature; the nature of God could not have brought forth ſuch an act. And therefore ſome ſay, that God after he had created man, could not preſently annihilate him, and take away his life and being. As a ſovereign he might do it, as almighty he was able to do it, as well as create him; but in regard of his goodneſs, he could not morally do it: for had he annihilated man as ſoon as ever he had made him, he had not made man for himſelf, and for his own glory; to be loved, worſhipped, ſought, and acknowledged by him: he would not then have been the end of man; he had created him in vain,

and the world in vain, which he aſſures us he did not. And certainly if the gifts of God be without repentance, man could not have been annihilated after his creation without repentance in God, without any cauſe, had not ſin entered into the world. If God did not ſay to man, after ſin made its entrance into the world, *ſeek ye me in vain*, he could not becauſe of his goodneſs, have ſaid ſo to man in his innocence. As God is neceſſarily mind, ſo he is neceſſarily will; as he is neceſſarily knowing, ſo he is neceſſarily loving. He could not be bleſſed, if he did not know himſelf, and his own perfection: nor good, if he did not delight in himſelf, and his own perfections. And this goodneſs whereby he delights in himſelf, is the ſource of his delight in his creatures, wherein he ſees the footſteps of himſelf. If he loves himſelf, he cannot but love the reſemblance of himſelf, and the image of his own goodneſs. He loves himſelf becauſe he is the higheſt goodneſs, and excellency; and loves every thing as it reſembles himſelf; becauſe it is an efflux of his own goodneſs: and as he doth neceſſarily love himſelf, and his own excellency, ſo he doth neceſſarily love any thing, that reſembles that excellency, which is the primary object of his eſteem.

5. But though he be neceſſarily good, yet he is alſo freely good.—The neceſſity of the goodneſs of his nature hinders not the liberty of his actions: the matter of his acting is not at all neceſſary, but the manner of his acting in a good and bountiful way, is neceſſary, as well as free. He created the world and man freely, becauſe he might chooſe whether he would create it, but he created them good neceſſarily, becauſe he was the firſt neceſſarily good in his nature, before he was freely a creator. When he created man, he freely gave him a poſitive law, but neceſſarily a wiſe and righteous law; becauſe he was neceſſarily wiſe, and righteous, before he was freely a law-giver. When he makes a promiſe

promiſe, he freely lets the word go out of his lips, but when he hath made it, he is neceſſarily a faithful performer; becauſe he was neceſſarily true and righteous in his nature, before he was freely a promiſer. God is neceſſarily good in his nature, but free in his communications of it: to make him neceſſarily to communicate his goodneſs in the firſt creation of the creature, would render him but impotent, good without liberty, and without will: if the communications of it be not free, the eternity of the world muſt neceſſarily be concluded, which ſome anciently aſſerted from the naturalneſs of God's goodneſs, making the world flow from God as light from the ſun.

God indeed is neceſſarily good affective in regard of his nature, but freely good effective in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular ſubject he pitcheth on. He is not ſo neceſſarily communicative of his goodneſs as the ſun of his light, or a tree of its cooling ſhade, that chooſeth not its object, but enlightens all indifferently, without any variation or diſtinction: this were to make God of no more underſtanding than the ſun, to ſhine not where it pleaſeth, but where it muſt. He is an underſtanding agent, and hath a ſovereign right to chooſe his own ſubjects. It would not be a ſupreme goodneſs, if it were not a voluntary goodneſs. It is agreeable to the nature of the higheſt good, to be abſolutely free, to diſpenſe his goodneſs in what methods, and meaſures he pleaſeth, according to the free determinations of his own will, guided by the wiſdom of his mind, and regulated by the holineſs of his nature. He is not to *give an account of any of his matters. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion.* And he will be good to whom he will be good: when he doth act, he cannot but act well, ſo it is neceſſary; yet he may act this good, or that good to this or that degree, ſo it

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is free. As it is the perfection of his nature, it is neceſſary; as it is the communication of his bounty, it is voluntary. The eye cannot but ſee if it be open, yet it may glance upon this or that colour, fix upon this or that object, as it is conducted by the will. God neceſſarily loves himſelf, becauſe he is good, yet not by conſtraint, but freedom; becauſe his affection to himſelf is from a knowledge of himſelf: he neceſſarily loves his own image; becauſe it is his image, yet freely, becauſe not blindly, but from motions of underſtanding and will. What neceſſity could there be upon him, to reſolve to communicate his goodneſs? it could not be to make himſelf better by it; for he had a goodneſs incapable of any addition: he confers a goodneſs on his creatures, but reaps not a harveſt of goodneſs to his own eſſence from his creatures. What obligation could there be from the creature, to confer a goodneſs on him to this or that degree, for this or that duration? If he had not created a man, nor angel, he had done them no wrong. If he had given them only a ſimple being, he had manifeſted a part of his goodneſs, without giving them a right to challenge any more of him. If he had taken away their beings after a time, when he had anſwered his end, he had done them no injury: for what law obliged him, to enrich them, and leave them in that being wherein he had inveſted them, but his ſole goodneſs? Whatever ſparks of goodneſs any creature hath, are the free effuſions of God's bounty, the offspring of his own inclination to do well, the ſimple favor of the donor; not purchaſed, not merited by the creature. God is as unconſtrained in his liberty in all his communications, as infinite in his goodneſs, the fountain of them.

6. The diſplaying of this goodneſs was the motive and end of all his works of creation and providence.—God being infinitely wiſe, could not act without the higheſt reaſon, and for the higheſt end: the

the reaſon that induced him to create, muſt be of as great an eminency as himſelf: the motive could not be taken from without him; becauſe there was nothing but himſelf in being: it muſt be therefore from within himſelf, and from ſome one of thoſe moſt excellent perfections, whereby we conceive him. But upon the exact conſideration of all of them, none can ſeem to challenge that honour of being the motive of them, to reſolve the ſetting forth any work, but his own goodneſs; this being the firſt thing manifeſt in his creation, ſeems to be the firſt thing moving him to a reſolution to create; wiſdom may be conſidered as directing; power conſidered as acting; but it is natural to reflect upon goodneſs as moving the one to direct, and the other to act: power was the principle of his action, wiſdom the rule of his action, goodneſs the motive of his action; principle and rule are awakened by the motive, and ſubſervient to the end. That which is the moſt amiable perfection in the divine nature, and that which he firſt took notice of as the foot-ſteps of them in the diſtinct views of every day's work, and the general view of the whole frame, ſeems to claim the beſt right to be entitled the motive and end of his creation of things.

Thirdly, That God is good.

The more excellent any thing is in nature, the more of goodneſs and kindneſs it hath.—For we ſee more of love and kindneſs in creatures that are endued with ſenſe, to their deſcendants, than in plants, that have only a principle of growth. Plants preſerve their ſeeds whole that are encloſed in them; animals look to their young only after they are dropt from them; yet after ſome time take no more notice of them than of a ſtranger that never had any birth from them. But man, that hath a higher principle of reaſon, cheriſheth his offſpring, and gives them marks of his goodneſs while he lives, and leaves not the world at the time of his death without ſome

teſtimonies

teſtimonies of it; much more muſt God, who is a higher principle than ſenſe or reaſon, be good and bountiful to all his offspring. The more perfect any thing is, the more it doth communicate itſelf. The ſun is more excellent than the ſtars, and therefore doth more ſenſibly, more extenſively diſperſe its liberal beams than the ſtars do. And the better any man is, the more charitable he is. God being the moſt excellent nature, having nothing more excellent than himſelf, becauſe nothing more ancient than himſelf, who is the Ancient of Days; there is nothing therefore better and more bountiful than himſelf.

He is the cauſe of all created goodneſs, he muſt therefore himſelf be the ſupreme good.—What good is in the heavens, is the product of ſome being above the earth; and thoſe varieties of goodneſs in the earth, and ſeveral creatures, are ſome where in their fulneſs and union: that therefore which poſſeſſes all thoſe ſcattered goodneſſes in their fulneſs, muſt be all good, all that good which is diſplayed in creatures; therefore ſovereignly beſt. Whatſoever natural or moral goodneſs there is in the world, in angels, or men, or inferior creatures, is a line drawn from that center, the bubblings of that fountain. God cannot but be better than all, ſince the goodneſs that is in creatures is the fruit of his own. If he were not good, he could produce no good: he could not beſtow what he had not. If the creature be good, as the apoſtle ſays every creature is, he muſt needs be better than all, becauſe they have nothing but what is derived to them from him; and much more goodneſs than all, becauſe finite beings are not capable of receiving into them, and containing in themſelves all that goodneſs which is in an infinite being; when we ſearch for good in creatures, they come ſhort of that ſatisfaction which is in God. As the certainty of a firſt principle of all things, is neceſſarily concluded from the being of creatures,

creatures, and the upholding and ſuſtaining power and virtue of God is concluded from the mutability of thoſe things in the world; whence we infer, that there muſt be ſome ſtable foundation of thoſe tottering things, ſome firm hinge upon which thoſe changeable things do move, without which there would be no ſtability in the kinds of things, no order, no agreement, or union among them: ſo from the goodneſs of every thing, and their uſefulneſs to us, we muſt conclude him good, who made all thoſe things. And ſince we find diſtinct goodneſſes in the creature, we muſt conclude that one principle whence they did flow, excels in the glory of goodneſs: all thoſe little glimmerings of goodneſs which are ſcattered in the creatures, as the image in the glaſs, repreſent the face, poſture, motion of him whoſe image it is, but not in the fulneſs of life and ſpirit, as in the original; it is but a ſhadow at the beſt, and ſpeaks ſomething more excellent in the copy. As God hath an infiniteneſs of being above them, ſo he hath a ſupremacy of goodneſs beyond them: what they have, is but a participation from him; what he hath, muſt be infinitely ſuper-eminent above them. If any thing be good by itſelf, it muſt be infinitely good, it would ſet itſelf no bounds; we muſt make as many gods, as particulars of goodneſs in the world: but being good by the bounty of another, that from whence they flow muſt be the chief goodneſs. It is God's excellency and goodneſs, which like a beam pierceth all things: he decks ſpirits with reaſon, endues matter with form, furniſheth every thing with uſeful qualities.

As one beam of the ſun illuſtrates fire, water, and earth, ſo one beam of God enlightens and endows minds, ſouls, and univerſal nature: nothing in the world had its goodneſs from itſelf, any more than it had its being from itſelf. The cauſe muſt be richer than the effect.

But

But that which I intend is the defence of this goodneſs.

The goodneſs of God is not impaired by ſuffering ſin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. —It is rather a teſtimony of God's goodneſs, that he gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge againſt his goodneſs, that he ſettled man in a capacity to be evil. God was firſt a benefactor to man, before man could be a rebel againſt God. May it not be enquired, whether it had not been againſt the wiſdom of God, to have made a rational creature with liberty, and not ſuffer him to act according to the nature he was endowed with, and to follow his own choice for ſome time? Had it been wiſdom to frame a free creature, and totally to reſtrain that creature from following its liberty? Had it been goodneſs, as it were, to force the creature to be happy againgſt its will? God's goodneſs furniſhed Adam with a power to ſtand; was it contrary to his goodneſs, to leave Adam to a free uſe of that power? to make a creature, and not let that creature act according to the freedom of his nature, might have been thought to have been a blot upon his wiſdom, and a conſtraint upon the creature, not to make uſe of that freedom of his nature, which the divine goodneſs had beſtowed upon him. To what purpoſe did God make a law, to govern his rational creature, and yet reſolve that creature ſhould not have his choice, whether he would obey it or no? Had he been really conſtrained to obſerve it, his obſervation of it could no more have been called obedience, than the acts of brutes that have a kind of natural conſtraint upon them by the inſtinct of their nature, can be called obedience: in vain had God endowed a creature with ſo great and noble a principle as liberty. Had it been goodneſs in God after he had made a reaſonable creature, to govern him in the ſame manner as he did brutes by a neceſſary inſtinct? It was the goodneſs of God

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to the nature of men and angels, to leave them in ſuch a condition, to be able to give him a voluntary obedience, a nobler offering than the whole creation could preſent him with; and ſhall this goodneſs be undervalued, and accounted mean, becauſe man made an ill uſe of it, and turned it into wantonneſs? As the unbelief of man doth not diminiſh the redeeming grace of God, ſo neither doth the fall of man leſſen the creating goodneſs of God. Beſides, why ſhould the permiſſion of ſin be thought more a blemiſh to his goodneſs, than the providing a way of redemption for the deſtroying the works of ſin, and the devil be judged the glory of it, whereby he diſcovered a goodneſs of grace that ſurpaſt the bounds of nature? If this were a thing that might ſeem to obſcure, or deface the goodneſs of God in the permiſſion of the fall of angels and Adam, it was in order to bring forth a greater goodneſs in a more illuſtrious pomp to the view of the world: *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* But if nothing could be alledged for the defence of his goodneſs in this, it were moſt comely for an ignorant creature, not to impeach his goodneſs, but adore him in his proceedings, in the language the apoſtle doth, ver. 33, *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out.*

The afflictions God inflicts upon his ſervants, are no violations of his goodneſs.—Sometimes God afflicts men for their temporal and eternal good; for the good of their grace in order to the good of their glory; which is a more excellent good than afflictions can be an evil. The heathens reflected upon Ulyſſes's hardſhip as a mark of Jupiter's goodneſs and love to him, that his virtue might be more conſpicuous. By ſtrong perſecutions brought upon the church, her lethargy is cured, her chaff purged, the glorious fruit of the goſpel brought forth in the lives of

of her children; the number of her proſelytes multiply, and the ſtrength of her weak ones is increaſed, by the teſtimonies of courage and conſtancy which the ſtronger preſent to them in their ſufferings. Do thoſe good effects ſpeak a want of goodneſs in God, who brings them into this condition? By thoſe he cures his people of their corruptions, and promotes their glory by giving them the honour of ſuffering for the truth, and raiſeth their ſpirits to a divine pitch. The epiſtles of Paul to the Epheſians, Philippians, and Coloſſians, wrote by him while he was in Nero's chains, ſeem to have a higher ſtrain than ſome of thoſe he wrote when he was at liberty.

As for afflictions, they are marks of a greater meaſure of fatherly goodneſs than he diſcovers to thoſe that live in an uninterrupted proſperity, who are not dignified with that glorious title of ſons, as thoſe are that he chaſteneth. Can any queſtion the goodneſs of the father that corrects his child to prevent his vice and ruin, and bring him up to virtue and honour? It would be a cruelty in a father leaving his child without chaſtiſement, to leave him to that miſery an ill education would reduce him to. *God judges us that we might not be condemned with the world.* Is it not a greater goodneſs to ſeparate us from the world to happineſs by his ſcourge, than to leave us to the condemnation of the world for our ſins? Is it not a greater goodneſs to make us ſmart here, than to ſee us ſcorched hereafter? As he is our ſhepherd, it is no part of his enmity or ill-will to us, to make us feel ſometimes the weight of his ſhepherd's crook, to reduce us from our ſtrangling. The viſiting our tranſgreſſions with rods, and our iniquities with ſtripes, is one of the articles of the covenant of grace, wherein the greateſt luſtre of his goodneſs appears. The advantage and gain of our afflictions is a greater teſtimony of his goodneſs to us, than the pain can be

be of his unkindneſs: the ſmart is well recompenced by the acceſſion of clearer graces.

It is rather a high mark of his goodneſs, than an argument for the want of it, that he treats us as his children, and will not ſuffer us to run into that deſtruction we are more ambitious of, than the happineſs he hath prepared for us, and by afflictions he fits us for the partaking of, by imparting his holineſs together with the inflicting his rod. That is the third thing, God is good.

Fourthly, The manifeſtation of this goodneſs in creation, redemption and providence.

1. In creation.—This is apparent from what hath been ſaid before, that no other attribute could be the motive of his creating, but his goodneſs; his goodneſs was the cauſe that he made any thing, and his wiſdom was the cauſe that he made every thing in order and harmony: he pronounced *every thing good, i. e.* ſuch as became his goodneſs to bring forth into being, and reſted in them more, as they were ſtamps of his goodneſs, than as they were marks of his power, or beams of his wiſdom; and if all creatures were able to anſwer to this queſtion, what that was which created them? The anſwer would be, almighty power, but employed by the motion of infinite goodneſs. All the varieties of creatures are ſo many apparitions of this goodneſs. Though God be one, yet he cannot appear as a God but in variety. As the greatneſs of power is not manifeſt but in variety of works, and an acute underſtanding not diſcovered, but in variety of reaſonings; ſo an infinite goodneſs is not ſo apparent, as in variety of communications.

Creation was the firſt act of goodneſs without himſelf. When he was alone from eternity, he contented himſelf with himſelf, abounding in his own bleſſedneſs, delighting in that abundance: he was incomprehenſibly rich in the poſſeſſion of an unſtained felicity. This creation was the firſt efflux

of his goodneſs without himſelf: for the work of creation cannot be called a work of mercy: mercy ſuppoſeth a creature miſerable; but that which hath no being is ſubject to no miſery: for to be miſerable, ſuppoſeth a nature in being, and deprived of that good which belongs to the pleaſure and felicity of nature; but ſince there was no being, there could be no miſery: the creation therefore was not an act of mercy, but an act of ſole goodneſs: and therefore it was the ſpeech of an heathen, that "when God firſt ſet upon the creation of the world, he transformed himſelf into love and goodneſs." This led forth and animated his power, the firſt moment it drew the univerſe out of the womb of nothing.

There is not one creature but hath a character of his goodneſs.—The whole world is a map to repreſent, and a herald to proclaim this perfection: It is as difficult not to ſee ſomething of it in every creature with the eye of our minds, as it is not to ſee the beams of the ſhining ſun with thoſe of our bodies. *He is good to all:* he is therefore good in all; not a drop of the creation, but is a drop of his goodneſs.

Theſe are the colours worn upon the heads of every creature. As in every ſpark the light of the fire is manifeſted, ſo doth every grain of the creation wear the viſible badges of this perfection. In all the lights, the Father of Lights hath made the riches of goodneſs apparent; no creature is ſilent in it; it is legible to all nations in every work of his hands. That as it is ſaid of Chriſt, *In the volume of thy book it is written of me:* in the volume of the book of the ſcripture it is written of me, and my goodneſs in redemption; ſo it may be ſaid of God, in the volume of the book of the creature it is written of me, and my goodneſs in creation. Every creature is a page in this book, whoſe *line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Though indeed the leſs goodneſs in ſome is obſcured by the more reſplendent goodneſs

goodneſs he hath imparted unto others: what an admirable piece of goodneſs is it to communicate life to a fly? How ſhould we ſtand gazing upon it, till we turn our eye inwards, and view our own frame, which is much more raviſhing?

But let us ſee the goodneſs of God in the creation of man.

In the being and nature of man.—God hath with a liberal hand conferred upon every creature the beſt being it was capable of in that ſtation and order, and conducing to that end and uſe in the world he intended it for: but when you have run over all the meaſures of goodneſs God hath poured forth upon other creatures, you will find a greater fulneſs of it in the nature of man, whom he hath placed in a more ſublime condition, and indued with choicer prerogatives than other creatures: he was made but little lower than the angels, and much more loftily crowned with glory and honour than other creatures. Had it not been for divine goodneſs, this excellent creature had lain wrapt up in the abyſs of nothing: or if he had called it out of nothing, there might have been leſs of ſkill, and leſs of goodneſs diſplayed in the forming of it, and a leſſer kind of being imparted to it, than what he hath conferred.

As to the life of man in this world, God by an immenſe goodneſs copied out in him the whole creation, and made him an abridgment of the higher and lower world; a little world in a greater one. The link of the two worlds, of heaven and earth, as the ſpiritual and corporeal natures are united in him, the earth in the duſt of his body, and the heavens in the cryſtal of his ſoul: he hath the upper ſprings of the life of angels in his reaſon, and the nether ſprings of the life of animals in his ſenſe. God diſplayed thoſe virtues in man, which he had diſcovered in the reſt of the lower creation; but beſides the communication which he had with

earth in his nature, God gave him a participation with heaven in his ſpirit. A mere bodily being he hath given to the heavens, earth, elements; a vegetative life, or a life of growth, he hath vouchſafed to the plants of the ground: he hath ſtretched out his liberality more to animals and beaſts by giving them ſenſe. All theſe hath his goodneſs linked in man, being, life, ſenſe, with a richer dole than any of thoſe creatures have received in a rational, intellectual life, whereby he approacheth to the nature of angels. This ſome of the Jews underſtood. *God breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul.* Breath of lives, in the Hebrew; not one ſort of life, but that variety of lives which he had imparted to other creatures: all the perfections ſcattered in other creatures, do unitedly meet in man: ſo that Philo might well call him "every creature, the model of the whole creation;" his ſoul is heaven, and his body is earth. So that the immenſity of his goodneſs to man, is as great as all that goodneſs you behold in ſenſative and intelligible things.

2. The manifeſtation of this goodneſs in redemption.—The whole goſpel is nothing but one entire mirror of divine goodneſs: the whole of redemption is wrapt up in that one expreſſion of the angels ſong, Luke ii. 14, *Good will towards men.* The angels ſang but one ſong before, which is upon record, but the matter of it ſeems to be the wiſdom of God chiefly in creation. Job xxxviii. 7, compared with Job ix. 5, 6, 8, 9. The angels are there meant by the morning ſtars; the viſible ſtars of heaven were not diſtinctly formed, when the foundations of the earth were laid: and the title of the ſons of God verifies it, ſince none but creatures of underſtanding are dignified in ſcripture with that title. There they celebrate his wiſdom in creation; here his goodneſs in redemption, which is the entire matter of the ſong.

Goodneſs

Goodneſs was the ſpring of redemption.—All and every part of it owes only to this perfection the appearance of it in the world. This only excited wiſdom to bring forth from ſo great an evil as the apoſtacy of man, ſo great a good as the recovery of him. When man fell from his created goodneſs, God would evidence that he could not fall from his infinite goodneſs: that the greateſt evil could not ſurmount the ability of his wiſdom to contrive, nor the riches of his bounty to preſent us a remedy for it. Divine goodneſs would not ſtand by a ſpectator, without being reliever of that miſery man had plunged himſelf into; but by aſtoniſhing methods it would recover him to happineſs, who had wreſted himſelf out of his hands, to fling himſelf into the moſt deplorable calamity: and it was the greater, ſince it ſurmounted thoſe natural inclinations, and thoſe ſtrong provocations, which he had to ſhower down the power of his wrath. What could be the ſource of ſuch a procedure, but this excellency of the divine nature; ſince no violence could force him, nor was there any merit to perſuade to ſuch a reſtoration? This under the name of his love, is rendered the ſole cauſe of the redeeming death of the Son: it was to commend his love with the higheſt gloſs, and in ſo ſingular a manner, that had not its parallel in nature, nor in all his other works, and reaches in the brightneſs of it beyond the manifeſted extent of any other attribute. It muſt be only a miraculous goodneſs that induced him to expoſe the life of his Son to thoſe difficulties in the world, and death upon the croſs for the freedom of ſordid rebels: his great end was to give ſuch a demonſtration of the liberality of his nature, as might be attractive to his creature, remove its ſhakings and tremblings, and encourage its approaches to him. It is in this he would not only manifeſt his love, but aſſume the name of love. By this name the Holy Ghoſt calls him in relation to this good will

manifeſted in his Son, *God is love. In this is manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* He would take the name he never expreſt himſelf in before. He was Jehovah in regard of the truth of his promiſe; ſo he would be known of old: he is goodneſs in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the miſſion of his Son: and therefore he would be known by the name of love now in the days of the goſpel.

In particular wherein this goodneſs appears;

1. The firſt reſolution to redeem, and the means appointed for redemption, could have no other inducement but divine goodneſs.—We cannot too highly value the merit of Chriſt; but we muſt not ſo much extend the merit of Chriſt, as to draw a value to eclipſe the goodneſs of God: though we owe our redemption and the fruits of it to the death of Chriſt, yet we owe not the firſt reſolutions of redemption, and aſſumption of our nature, the means of redemption to the merit of Chriſt. Divine goodneſs only, without the aſſociation of any merit, not only of man but of the Redeemer himſelf, begat the firſt purpoſe of our recovery: he was ſingled out, and predeſtinated to be our Redeemer, before he took our nature to merit our redemption. *God ſent his Son,* is a frequent expreſſion in the goſpel of St. John. To what end did God ſend Chriſt, but to redeem? The purpoſe of redemption therefore preceded the pitching upon Chriſt as the means and procuring cauſe of it, *i. e.* of our actual redemption, but not of the redeeming purpoſe; the end is always in intention before the means. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;* the love of God to the world was firſt in intention and the order of nature, before the will of giving his Son to the world. His intention of ſaving was before the miſſion of a Saviour: ſo that this affection roſe not from the merit of Chriſt, but the merit of Chriſt was

was directed by this affection. It was the effect of it, not the cauſe. Nor was the union of our nature with his merited by him; all his meritorious acts were performed in our nature: the nature therefore wherein he performed it, was not merited; that grace which was not, could not merit what it was: he could not merit that humanity, which muſt be aſſumed before he could merit any thing for us, becauſe all merit for us muſt be offered in the nature which had offended. It is true, Chriſt gave himſelf, but by the order of divine goodneſs; he that begat him pitched upon him, and called him to this great work: he is therefore called *the Lamb of God*, as being ſet apart by God to be a propitiating and appeaſing ſacrifice. He is the *Wiſdom of God*, ſince from the Father he reveals the council and order of redemption. In this regard he calls God *his God* in the prophet, and in the evangeliſt; though he was big with affection for the accompliſhment, yet he came not to do his own will, but the will of divine goodneſs: his own will it was too, but not principally as being the firſt wheel in motion, but ſubordinate to the eternal will of divine bounty. It was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the dreggy cup of bitterneſs. Divine juſtice laid upon him the iniquity of us all, but divine goodneſs intended it for our reſcue: divine goodneſs fingled him out, and ſet him apart: divine goodneſs invited him to it: divine goodneſs commanded him to effect it, and put a law into his heart, to bias him in the performing of it: divine goodneſs ſent him, and divine goodneſs moved juſtice to bruiſe him; and after his ſacrifice, divine goodneſs accepted him, and carreſſed him for it. So earneſt was it for our redemption, as to give out ſpecial and irreverſible orders: death was commanded to be endured by him for us, and life commanded to be imparted by him to us. If God had not been the mover, but had received the propoſal from another,

he might have heard it, but was not bound to grant it: his ſovereign authority was not under any obligation to receive another's ſponſion for the miſerable criminal. As Chriſt is the head of man, ſo *God is the head of Chriſt*; he did nothing but by his directions, as he was not a mediator but by the conſtitution of divine goodneſs. *As a liberal man deviſeth liberal things*, ſo did a bountiful God deviſe a bountiful act, wherein his kindneſs and love as a Saviour appeared: he was poſſeſſed with the reſolutions to manifeſt his goodneſs in Chriſt *in the beginning of his way*, before he deſcended to the act of creation. This intention of goodneſs preceded his making that creature man, who he foreſaw would fall, and by his fall disjoint, and entangle the whole frame of the world without ſuch a proviſion.

2. In God's giving Chriſt to be our redeemer, he gave the higheſt gift that it was poſſible for divine goodneſs to beſtow. As there is not a greater God than himſelf to be conceived, ſo there is not a greater gift for this great God to preſent to his creatures: never did God go further in any of his excellent perfections than this. It is ſuch a dole that cannot be tranſcended with a choicer: he is as it were come to the laſt mite of his treaſure. And though he could create millions of worlds for us, he cannot give a greater ſon to us. He could abound in the expreſſions of his power in new creations of worlds, which have not yet been ſeen, and in the luſtre of his wiſdom in more ſtately ſtructures; but if he ſhould frame as many worlds, as there are mites of duſt and matter in this, and make every one of them as bright and glorious as the ſun; though his power and wiſdom would be more ſignalized, yet his goodneſs could not, ſince he hath not a choicer gift to bleſs thoſe brighter worlds withal, than he hath conferred upon this. Nor can immenſe goodneſs contrive a richer means to conduct thoſe worlds to happineſs, than he hath both invented for this world,

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and preſented it with. It cannot be imagined, that it can extend itſelf further, than to give a gift equal with himſelf; a gift as dear to him as himſelf. His wiſdom, had it ſtudied millions of eternities, (excuſe the expreſſion, ſince eternity admits of no millions, it being an interminable duration) it could have found out no more to give, this goodneſs could have beſtowed no more, and our neceſſity could not have required a greater offering for our relief. When God intended in redemption the manifeſtation of his higheſt goodneſs, it could not be without the donation of the choiceſt gift. As when he would enſure our comfort, he ſwears by himſelf, becauſe he cannot ſwear by a greater: ſo when he would enſure our happineſs, he gives his Son, becauſe he cannot give a greater, being equal with himſelf. Had the Father given himſelf in perſon, he had given one firſt in order, but not greater in eſſence and glorious perfections: it could have been no more than the life of God, that ſhould then have been laid down for us; and ſo it was now, ſince the human nature did not ſubſiſt but in his divine perſon.

It is a greater gift than worlds, or all things purchaſed by him.—What was the gift but *the image of his perſon, and the brightneſs of his glory?* What was this gift, but one as rich as eternal bleſſedneſs could make him? What was the gift, but one that poſſeſſed the fulneſs of earth, and the more immenſe riches of heaven? It is a more valuable preſent, than if he preſented us with thouſands of worlds of angels and inferior creatures, becauſe his perſon is incomparably greater, not only than all conceivable, but inconceivable creations: we are more obliged to him for it, than if he had made us angels of the higheſt rank in heaven, becauſe it is a gift of more value than the whole angelical nature, becauſe he is an infinite perſon; and therefore infinitely tranſcends whatſoever is finite, though of the higheſt dignity. The wounds of an almighty God for us

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are a greater teſtimony of goodneſs, than if we had all the other riches of heaven and earth. This perfection had not appeared in ſuch an aſtoniſhing grandeur, had it pardoned us without ſo rich a ſatisfaction; that had been pardon to our ſin, not a God of our nature. *God ſo loved the world* that he pardoned it, had not ſounded ſo great and ſo good, as God ſo loved the world *that he gave his only begotten Son. Eſt aliquid in Chriſto formoſius Servatore.* There is ſomething in Chriſt more excellent and comely than the office of a Saviour; the greatneſs of his perſon is more excellent, than the ſalvation procured by his death: it was a greater gift than was beſtowed upon innocent Adam, or the holy angels. In the creation, his goodneſs gave us creatures for our uſe: in our redemption, his goodneſs gives us what was deareſt to him for our ſervice; our ſovereign in office to benefit us, as well as in a royalty to govern us.

It was a greater gift, becauſe it was his own Son —Not an angel. It had been a mighty goodneſs to have given one of the loſty ſeraphims: a greater goodneſs to have given the whole corporation of thoſe glorious ſpirits for us; thoſe children of the moſt high: but he gave that Son, whom he commands all the angels to worſhip, and all men to adore, and pay the loweſt homage to; that Son that is to be honoured by us, as we honour the Father; that Son which was his delight; *his delights* in the Hebrew, wherein all the delights of the Father were gathered in one, as well as of the whole creation; and not ſimply a Son, but an only begotten Son, upon which Chriſt lays the ſtreſs with an emphaſis. He had but one Son in heaven or earth, one Son from an unviewable eternity, and that one Son he gave for a degenerate world; this Son he conſecrated for evermore a prieſt. The word of the oath makes the Son; the peculiarity of his ſonſhip heightens the goodneſs of the donor. It was no meaner a perſon

perſon that he gave to empty himſelf of his glory, to fulfil an obedience for us, that we might be rendered happy partakers of the divine nature. Thoſe that know the natural affection of a father to a ſon, muſt judge the affection of God the Father to the Son infinitely greater, than the affection of an earthly father to the ſon of his bowels. It muſt be an unparalleled goodneſs, to give up a Son that he loved with ſo ardent an affection for the redemption of rebels: abandon a glorious Son to a diſhonourable death for the ſecurity of thoſe that had violated the laws of righteouſneſs, and endeavoured to pull the ſovereign crown from his head. Beſides, being an only Son, all thoſe affections centered in him, which in parents would have been divided among a multitude of children: ſo then, as it was a teſtimony of the higheſt faith and obedience in *Abraham to offer up his only begotten Son to God*; ſo it was the triumph of divine goodneſs, to give ſo great, ſo dear a perſon for ſo little a thing as man; and for ſuch a piece of nothing and vanity, as a ſinful world.

3. And this Son given to reſcue us by his death. —It was a gift to us; for our ſakes he deſcended from his throne, and dwelt on earth; for our ſakes he was made fleſh, and infirm fleſh; for our ſakes he was made a curſe, and ſcorched in the furnace of his Father's wrath; for our ſakes he went naked, armed only with his own ſtrength into the liſts of that combat with the devils, that led us captive. Had he given him to be a leader for the conqueſt of ſome earthly enemies, it had been a great goodneſs to diſplay his banners, and bring us under his conduct; but he ſent him to lay down his life in the bittereſt and moſt inglorious manner, and expoſed him to a curſed death for our redemption from that dreadful curſe which would have broken us to pieces, and irreparably have cruſhed us. He gave him to us, to ſuffer for us as a man, and redeem

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us as a God; to be a ſacrifice to expiate our ſin, by tranſlating the puniſhment upon himſelf, which was merited by us. Thus was he made low to exalt us, and debaſed to advance us, made poor to enrich us; and eclipſed to brighten our ſullied natures, and wounded that he might be a phyſician for our languiſhments: he was ordered to taſte the bitter cup of death, that we might drink of the rivers of immortal life, and pleaſures: to ſubmit to the frailties of the human nature, that we might poſſeſs the glories of the divine: he was ordered to be a ſufferer, that we might be no longer captives; and to paſs through the fire of divine wrath, that he might purge our nature from the droſs it had contracted. Thus was the righteous given for ſin, the innocent for criminals, the glory of heaven for the dregs of earth, and the immenſe riches of a deity expended to re-ſtock man.

4. And a Son that was exalted for what he had done for us by the order of divine goodneſs.—The exaltation of Chriſt was no leſs a ſignal mark of his miraculous goodneſs to us, than of his affection to him; ſince he was obedient by divine goodneſs to die for us, his advancement was for his obedience to thoſe orders. The name given to him above every name, was a repeated triumph of this perfection; ſince his paſſion was not for himſelf, he was wholly innocent, but for us who were criminal. His advancement was not only for himſelf as Redeemer, but for us as redeemed: divine goodneſs centered in him, both in his croſs and in his crown; for it was for the *purging our ſins he ſat down on the right hand of the Majeſty on high:* and the whole bleſſed ſociety of principalities and powers in heaven admire this goodneſs of God, and aſcribe to him honour, glory, and power, for advancing the Lamb ſlain. Divine goodneſs did not only give him to us, but gave him power, riches, ſtrength, and honour, for manifeſting this goodneſs to us, and opening the

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paſſages for its fuller conveyances to the ſons of men. Had not God had thoughts of a perpetual goodneſs, he would not have ſettled him ſo near him, to manage our cauſe, and teſtified ſo much affection to him on our behalf. This goodneſs gave him to be debaſed for us, and ordered him to be enthroned for us: as it gave him to us bleeding, ſo it would give him to us triumphing; that as we have a ſhare by grace in the merits of his humiliation, we might partake alſo of the glories of his coronation; that from firſt to laſt, we may behold nothing but the triumphs of divine goodneſs to fallen man.

5. In beſtowing this gift, divine goodneſs gives whole God to us.—Whatſoever is great and excellent in the godhead, the Father gives us, by giving us his Son: the Creator gives himſelf to us in his Son Chriſt. In giving creatures to us, he gives the riches of earth; in giving himſelf to us, he gives the riches of heaven, which ſurmount all underſtanding: it is in this gift he becomes our God, and paſſeth over the title of all that he is for our uſe and benefit, that every attribute in the divine nature may be claimed by us; not to be imparted to us whereby we may be deified; but employed for our welfare, whereby we may be bleſſed. He gave himſelf in creation to us in the image of his holineſs; but in redemption he gave himſelf in the image of his perſon: he would not only communicate the goodneſs without him, but beſtow upon us the infinite goodneſs of his own nature; that that which was his own end and happineſs, might be our end and happineſs, *viz.* himſelf.

By giving his Son, he hath given himſelf; and in both gifts he hath given all things to us: the Creator of all things is eminently all things: *He hath given all things into the hands of his Son*, and by conſequence given all things into the hands of his redeemed creatures, by giving them him to whom he

he gave all things; whatſoever we were inveſted in by creation, whatſoever we were deprived of by corruption, and more, he hath depoſited in ſafe hands for our enjoyment: and what can divine goodneſs do more for us? What further can it give unto us, than what it hath given, and in that gift deſigned for us.

This goodneſs is enhanced by conſidering the ſtate of man in the firſt tranſgreſſion, and ſince.

Man's firſt tranſgreſſion.—If we ſhould rip up every vein of that firſt ſin, ſhould we find any want of wickedneſs to excite a juſt indignation? What was there but ingratitude to divine bounty, and rebellion againſt divine ſovereignty? The royalty of God was attempted, the ſupremacy of divine knowledge above man's own knowledge envied; the riches of goodneſs whereby he lived and breathed, ſlighted: there is a diſcontent with God upon an unreaſonable ſentiment, that God had denied a knowledge to him, which was his right and due; when there ſhould have been an humble acknowledgement of that unmerited goodneſs, which had not only given him a being above other creatures, but placed him the governor and lord of thoſe that were inferior to him; what alienation of his underſtanding was there from knowing God, and of his will from loving him? A debauch of all his faculties; a ſpiritual adultery, in preferring not only one of God's creatures, but one of his deſperate enemies before him; thinking him a wiſer counſellor than infinite wiſdom, and imagining him poſſeſſed with kinder affections to him, than that God who had newly created him. Thus he joins in league with hell againſt heaven, with a fallen ſpirit againſt his benefactor, and enters into ſociety with rebels, that juſt before commenced a war againſt his and their common ſovereign: he did not only falter in, but caſt off the obedience due to his Creator; endeavoured to purloin his glory, and actually murdered

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all thoſe that were virtually in his loins. *Sin entered into the world by him, and death by ſin, and paſſed upon all men*, taking them off from their ſubjection to God, to be ſlaves to the damned ſpirits, and heirs of their miſery: and after all this he adds a foul imputation on God, taxing him as the author of his ſin, and thereby ſtains the beauty of his holineſs. But notwithſtanding all this, God ſtops not up the floodgates of his goodneſs, nor doth he entertain fiery reſolutions againſt man, but brings forth a healing promiſe; and ſends not an angel upon commiſſion, to reveal it to him, but preaches it himſelf to this forlorn and rebellious creature.

Could there be any thing in this fallen creature, to allure God to the expreſſion of his goodneſs?—Was there any good action in all his carriage, that could plead for a re-admiſſion of him to his former ſtate? Was there one good quality left, that could be an orator to perſuade divine goodneſs to ſuch a gracious procedure? Was there any moral goodneſs in man after this debauch, that might be an object of divine love? What was there in him, that was not rather a provocation, than an allurement? Could you expect that any perfection in God, ſhould find a motive in this ungrateful apoſtate, to open a mouth for him, and be an advocate to ſupport him, and bring him off from a juſt tribunal? or after divine goodneſs had begun to pity and plead for man, is it not wonderful that it ſhould not diſcontinue the plea, after it found man's excuſe to be as black as his crime; and his carriage upon his examination, to be as diſobliging as his firſt revolt? It might well be expected, that all the perfections in the divine nature, would have entered into an aſſociation eternally to treat this rebel according to his deſerts. What attractives were there in a ſilly worm, much leſs in ſuch compleat wickedneſs, inexcuſable enmity, infamous rebellion, to deſign a Redeemer for him, and ſuch a perſon as the Son of God to a fleſhy body

body, an eclipſe of glory, and an ignominious croſs? The meanneſs of man was further from alluring God to it, than the dignity of angels.

Was there not a world of demerit in man, to animate grace as well as wrath againſt him. We were ſo far from deſerving the opening any ſtreams of goodneſs, that we had merited floods of devouring wrath. What were all men, but enemies to God in a higher manner? every offence was infinite, as being committed againſt a being of infinite dignity; it was a ſtroke at the very being of God; a reſiſtance of all his attributes; it would degrade him from the height and perfection of his nature; it would not by its good will ſuffer God to be God. If *he that hates his brother, is a murderer of his brother*, he that hates his Creator, is a murderer of the deity, and every *carnal mind is enmity* to God: every ſin envies him his authority by breaking his precept; and envies him his goodneſs by defacing the marks of it: every ſin comprehends in it more than men or angels can conceive: that God who only hath the clear apprehenſions of his own dignity, hath the ſole clear apprehenſions of ſin's malignity. All men were thus by nature; thoſe that ſinned before the coming of the Redeemer, had been in a ſtate of ſin; thoſe that were to come after him would be in a ſtate of ſin by their birth, and be criminals as ſoon as ever they were creatures. All men, as well the glorified as thoſe in the fleſh, at the coming of the Redeemer, and thoſe that were to be born after were conſidered in a ſtate of ſin by God, when he bruiſed the Redeemer for them: all where filthy and unworthy of the eye of God: all had employed the faculties of their ſouls, and the members of their bodies, which they enjoined by his goodneſs, againſt the intereſt of his glory. Every rational creature had made himſelf a ſlave to thoſe creatures over whom he had appointed a Lord; ſubjected himſelf as a ſervant to his inferior, and ſtrutted as a ſuperior againſt his

liberal

liberal ſovereign, and by every ſin rendered himſelf more a child of ſatan, and enemy of God, and more worthy of the curſes of the law, and the torments of hell: was it not now a mighty goodneſs that would ſurmount thoſe high mountains of demerit, and elevate ſuch creatures by the depreſſion of his Son? Had we been poſſeſſed of the higheſt holineſs, a reward had been the natural effect of goodneſs: it was not poſſible that God ſhould be unkind to a righteous and innocent creature: his grace would have crowned that, which had been ſo agreeable to him: he had been a denier of himſelf, had he numbered innocent creatures in the rank of the miſerable. But to be kind to an enemy: to run counter to the vaſtneſs of demerit in man, was a ſuperlative goodneſs; a goodneſs triumphing above all the provocations of men, and pleas of juſtice. It was an abounding goodneſs of grace: *Where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound.* It ſwelled above the heights of ſin, and triumphed more than all his other attributes.

Man was reduced to the loweſt condition.—Our crimes had brought us to the loweſt calamity; we were brought to the duſt, and prepared for hell. Adam had not the boldneſs to requeſt, and therefore we may judge he had not the leaſt hopes of pardon; he was ſunk under wrath, and could have expected no better an entertainment, than the tempter, whoſe ſolicitations he had ſubmitted to: we had caſt the diadem from our heads, and loſt all our original excellency: we were loſt to our own happineſs, and loſt to our Creator's ſervice, when he was ſo kind as to ſend his Son to ſeek us, Matt. xviii. 11, and ſo liberal as to expend his blood for our cure and preſervation. How great was that goodneſs that would not abandon us in our miſery, but remit our crimes, and reſcue our perſons, and ranſom our ſouls by ſo great a price from the rights of juſtice, and horrors of hell, we were ſo fitted for?

The impotence of man enhanceth this goodneſs —Our own eye did ſcarce pity us, and it was impoſſible for our own hands to relieve us; we were inſenſible of our miſery, in love with our death; we courted our chains, and the noiſe of our fettering luſts were our muſic, *ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures.* Our luſts were our pleaſures; ſatan's yoke was as delightful to us to bear, as to him to impoſe: inſtead of being his oppoſers in his attempts againſt us, we were his voluntary ſeconds, and every whit as willing to embrace, as he was to propoſe his ruining temptations. As no man can recover himſelf from death, ſo no man can recover himſelf from wrath; he is as unable to redeem, as to create himſelf; he might as ſoon have ſtripped himſelf of his being, as put an end to his miſery; his captivity would have been endleſs, and his chains remedileſs, for any thing that he could do to knock them off, and deliver himſelf; he was too much in love with the ſink of ſin, to leave wallowing in it, and under too powerful a hand, to ceaſe frying in the flames of wrath. As the law could not be obeyed by man, after a corrupt principle had entered into him, ſo neither could juſtice be ſatisfied by him after his tranſgreſſion. The ſinner was indebted, but bankrupt; as he was unable to pay a mite of that obedience he owed to the precept, becauſe of his enmity; ſo he was unable to ſatisfy what he owed to the penalty, becauſe of his feebleneſs: he was as much without love to obſerve the one, as without ſtrength to bear the other: he could not becauſe of his enmity be ſubject to the law, or compenſate for his ſin, becauſe he was without ſtrength. His ſtrength to offend was great; but to deliver himſelf a mere nothing. Repentance was not a thing known by man after the fall, till he had hopes of redemption; and if he had known and exerciſed it, what compenſation are the tears of a malefactor for an injury done to the crown, and attempting

attempting the life of his prince? How great was divine goodneſs; not only to pity men in this ſtate, but to provide a ſtrong Redeemer for them? *O Lord, my ſtrength, and my Redeemer*, ſaid the pſalmiſt: when he found out a Redeemer for our miſery, he found out a ſtrength for our impotency.

To conclude this: behold the goodneſs of God, when we had thus unhandſomely dealt with him; had nothing to allure his goodneſs, multitudes of provocations to incenſe him, were reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to be the matter of his ſcoffs, and the ſport of divine juſtice, and ſo weak that we could not repair our own ruins; then did he open a fountain of freſh goodneſs in the death of his Son, and ſent forth ſuch delightful ſtreams, as in our original creation, we could never have taſted; not only overcame the reſentments of a provoked juſtice, but magnified itſelf by our lowneſs, and ſtrengthened itſelf by our weakneſs: his goodneſs had before created an innocent, but here it ſaves a malefactor; and ſends his Son to die for us, as if the Holy of Holies were the criminal, and the rebel the innocent. It had been a pompous goodneſs, to have given him as a king; but a goodneſs of greater grandeur, to expoſe him as a ſacrifice for ſlaves and enemies: had Adam remained innocent, and proved thankful for what he had received, it had been great goodneſs to have brought him to glory; but to bring filthy and rebellious Adam to it, ſurmounts by inexpreſſible degrees, that ſort of goodneſs he had experienced before; ſince it was not from a light evil, a tolerable curſe unawares brought upon us, but from the yoke we had willingly ſubmitted to, from the power of darkneſs we had courted, and the furnace of wrath we had kindled for ourſelves. What are we dead dogs, that he ſhould behold us with ſo gracious an eye? This goodneſs is thus enhanced, if you conſider the ſtate of man in his firſt tranſgreſſion and after.

This goodneſs further appears in the high advancement of our nature, after it had ſo highly offended.—By creation, we had an affinity with animals in our bodies, with angels in our ſpirits, with God in his image; but not with God in our nature till the incarnation of the Redeemer. Adam, by creation, was the ſon of God, but his nature was not one with the perſon of God: he was his ſon as created by him, but had no affinity to him by virtue of union with him: but now man doth not only ſee his nature in multitudes of men on earth, but by an aſtoniſhing goodneſs, beholds his nature united to the deity in heaven: that as he was the ſon of God by creation, he is now the brother of God by redemption; for with ſuch a title doth that perſon, who was the Son of God as well as the Son of Man, honour his diſciples: and becauſe he is of the ſame nature with them, he *is not aſhamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11.

Our nature, which was infinitely diſtant from, and below the deity, now makes one perſon with the Son of God. What man ſinfully aſpired to, God hath graciouſly granted and more: man aſpired to a likeneſs in knowledge, and God hath granted him an affinity in union. It had been aſtoniſhing goodneſs to angelize our natures, but in redemption divine goodneſs hath acted higher, in a ſort to deify our natures. In creation our nature was exalted above other creatures on earth; in our redemption our nature is exalted above all the hoſt of heaven: we were higher than the beaſts as creatures, but *lower than the angels*; but by the incarnation of the Son of God, our nature is elevated many ſteps above them. After it had ſunk itſelf by corruption below the beſtial nature, and as low as the diabolical, the *fulneſs of the godhead dwells in our nature bodily*, but never in the angels angelically. The Son of God deſcended to dignify our nature, by aſſuming it, and aſcended with our nature to have it crowned above

above thoſe ſtanding monuments of divine power, and goodneſs. That perſon that deſcended in our nature into the grave, and in the ſame nature was raiſed up again, is in that ſame nature ſet at the right hand of God in heaven, *far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.* Our refined clay, by an indiſſoluble union with this divine perſon, is honoured to ſit for ever upon a throne above all the tribes of ſeraphims and cherubims; and the perſon that wears it, is the head of the good angels, and the conqueror of the bad; the one are put under his feet, and the other commanded to adore him *that purged our ſins in our nature:* that divine perſon in our nature receives adoration from the angels; but the nature of man is not ordered to pay any homage and adorations to the angels. How could divine goodneſs to man more magnify itſelf? As we could not have a lower deſcent than we had by ſin, how could we have a higher aſcent, than by a ſubſtantial participation of a divine life in our nature in the unity of a divine perſon? Our earthly nature is joined to a heavenly perſon; our undone nature united to *one equal with God.* It may truly be ſaid, that man is God, which is infinitely more glorious for us, than if it could be ſaid, man is an angel. If it were goodneſs to advance our innocent nature above other creatures, the advancement of our degenerate nature above angels deſerves a higher title than mere goodneſs. It is a more gracious act, than if all men had been transformed into the pure ſpiritual nature of the loftieſt cherubims.

The third thing is the goodneſs of God in his government.—That goodneſs that deſpiſed not their creation, doth not deſpiſe their conduct. The ſame goodneſs that was the head that framed them, is the helm that guides them; his goodneſs hovers over the whole frame, either to prevent any wild diſorders unſuitable to his creating end, or to conduct

them to thoſe ends which might illuſtrate his wiſdom and goodneſs to his creatures. His goodneſs doth no leſs incline him to provide for them, than to frame them. It is the natural inclination of man to love what is purely the birth of his own ſtrength or ſkill. He is fond of preſerving his own inventions, as well as laborious in inventing them. It is the glory of a man to preſerve them, as well as to produce them. God loves every thing which he hath made, which love could not be without a continued diffuſiveneſs to them, ſuitable to the end for which he made them. It would be a vain goodneſs, if it did not intereſt itſelf in managing the world, as well as erecting it: without his government every thing in the world would juſtle againſt one another: the beauty of it would be more defaced; it would be an unruly maſs, a confuſed chaos rather than a comely world. If divine goodneſs reſpected it when it was nothing, it would much more reſpect it when it was ſomething by the ſole virtue of his power and good will to it, without any motive from any thing elſe than himſelf, becauſe there was nothing elſe but himſelf. But ſince he ſees his own ſtamp in things without himſelf in the creature, which is a kind of motive or moving object to divine goodneſs to preſerve it, when there was nothing without himſelf, that could be any motive to him, to create it: as when God hath created a creature, and it falls into miſery, that miſery of the creature, though it doth not neceſſitate his mercy, yet meeting with ſuch an affection as mercy in his nature, is a moving object to excite it: as the repentence of Nineveh drew forth the exerciſe of his pity and preſerving goodneſs. Certainly ſince God is good, he is bountiful, and if bountiful, he is provident. He would ſeem to envy and malign his creatures, if he did not provide for them, while he intends to uſe them: but infinite goodneſs cannot be affected with envy: for all envy implies a want of that good in ourſelves, which we

regard

regard with ſo evil an eye in another. But God being infinitely bleſſed, hath not the want of any good that can be a riſe to ſuch an uncomely diſpoſition. The Jews thought that divine goodneſs extended only to them in an immediate and particular care, and left all other nations and things to the guidance of angels. But the pſalmiſt, Pſ. cvii. a pſalm calculated for the celebration of this perfection, in the continued courſe of his providence throughout all ages of the world, aſcribes to divine goodneſs immediately all the advantages men meet with. He helps them in their actions, preſides over their motions, inſpects their ſeveral conditions, labours day and night in a perpetual care of them. The whole life of the world is linked together by divine goodneſs. Every thing is ordered by him in the place where he hath ſet it, without which the world would be ſtript of that excellency it hath by creation.*

Fifthly, The Uſe.

If God be ſo good, how unworthy is the contempt or abuſe of his goodneſs?

The contempt and abuſe of divine goodneſs is frequent and common;—it began in the firſt ages of the world, and commenced a few moments after the creation; it hath not to this day diminiſhed its affronts; Adam began the dance, and his poſterity have followed him; the injury was directed againſt this, when he entertained the ſeducer's notion of God's being an envious deity, in not indulging ſuch a knowledge, as he might have afforded him: *God doth know, that you ſhall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* The charge of envy is utterly inconſiſtent with pure goodneſs. What was the language of this notion ſo eaſily entertained by Adam, but that the tempter was better than God, and the nature of God as baſe and lordid as the nature of a devil? ſatan paints God with his own colours, repre-

* See more on Government in the diſcourſe on his Power.

ſents him as envious and malicious as himſelf: Adam admires, and believes the picture to be true, and hangs it up as a beloved one in the cloſet of his heart. The devil ſtill drives on the ſame game, fills mens' hearts with the ſame ſentiments, and by the ſame means he murdered our firſt parents, he redoubles the ſtabs to his poſterity. Every violation of the divine law is a contempt of God's goodneſs, as well as his ſovereignty, becauſe his laws are the products both of the one and the other. Goodneſs animates them while ſovereignity enjoys them: God hath commanded nothing but what doth conduce to our happineſs. All diſobedience implies, that his law is a ſnare to entrap us, and make us miſerable, and not an act of kindneſs, to render us happy, which is a diſparagement to this perfection, as if he had commanded what would promote our miſery, and prohibited what would conduce to our bleſſedneſs: to go far from him, and walk after vanity, is to charge him with our iniquity, and unrighteouſneſs, baſeneſs and cruelty in his commands; God implies it by his ſpeech, *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity?* As if like a tyrant he had conſulted cruelty in the compoſure of them, and deſigned to feaſt himſelf with the blood and miſery of his creatures. Every ſin is in its own nature a denial of God to be the chiefeſt good and happineſs, and implies that it is no great matter to loſe him; it is a forſaking him as the fountain of life, and a prefering a cracked and empty ciſtern as the chief happineſs before him. Though ſin is not ſo evil as God is good, yet it is the greateſt evil, and ſtands in oppoſition to God as the greateſt good. Sin diſorders the frame of the world; it endeavoured to fruſtrate all the communications of divine goodneſs in creation, and to ſtop up the way of any further ſtreams of it to his creatures.

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The abuſe and contempt of the divine goodneſs is baſe and diſingenuous. It is the higheſt wickedneſs, becauſe God is the higheſt goodneſs, pure goodneſs that cannot have any thing in him worthy of our contempt. Let men injure God under what notion they will, they injure his goodneſs; becauſe all his attributes are ſummed up in this one, and all as it were deified by it. For whatſoever power or wiſdom he might have, if he were deſtitute of this, he were not God: the contempt of his goodneſs implies him to be the greateſt evil, and worſt of beings. Badneſs, not goodneſs, is the proper object of contempt; as reſpect is a propenſion of mind to ſomething that is good, ſo contempt is an alienation of the mind from ſomething as evil, either ſimply or ſuppoſedly evil in its nature, or baſe or unworthy in its action towards that perſon that contemns it. As men deſire nothing but what they apprehend to be good, ſo they ſlight nothing but what they apprehend to be evil: ſince nothing therefore is more contemned by us than God, nothing more ſpurned at by us than God, it will follow that we regard him as the moſt loathſome and deſpicable being, which is the greateſt baſeneſs. And our contempt of him is worſe than that of the devil's; they injure him under the inevitable ſtrokes of his juſtice, and we ſlight him when we are ſurrounded with the expreſſions of his bounty; they abuſe him under phials of wrath, and we under a plenteous liberality; they malice him, becauſe he inflicts on them what is hurtful, and we deſpiſe him, becauſe he commands what is profitable, holy, and honorable in its own nature, though not in our eſteem. They are not under thoſe high obligations as we, they abuſe his creating, and we his redeeming goodneſs: he never ſent his Son to ſhed a drop of blood for their recovery, they can expect nothing but the torment of their perſons, and the deſtruction of their works: but we abuſe that goodneſs, that would reſcue us ſince we are miſerable,

miſerable, as well as that righteouſneſs which created us innocent. How baſe is it to uſe him ſo ill, that is not once or twice, but a daily, hourly benefactor to us; whoſe rain drops upon the earth for our food, and whoſe ſun ſhines upon the earth for our pleaſure as well as profit; ſuch a benefactor as is the true proprietor of what we have, and thinks nothing too good for them, that think every thing too much for his ſervice? How unworthy is it to be guilty of ſuch baſe carriage towards him, whoſe benefits we cannot want, nor live without? How diſingenuous both to God and our ourſelves, to *deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs, that are deſigned to lead us to repentance*, and by that to happineſs? and more heinous are the ſins of renewed men upon this account, becauſe they are againſt his goodneſs, not only offered to them, but taſted by them; not only againſt the notion of goodneſs, but the experience of goodneſs, and the reliſhed ſweetneſs of choiceſt bounty.

God's Dominion.

Pſalm ciii. 19.

THE LORD HATH PREPARED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS: AND HIS KINGDOM RULETH OVER ALL.

THE pſalmiſt conſiders God here as a great monarch and general, and all creatures as his hoſts, and regiments under him, and takes notice principally of two things.

1. The eſtabliſhment of his throne, together with the ſeat of it. *He hath prepared his throne in the heavens.*

2. The extent of his empire. *His kingdom rules over all.*

This text in all the parts of it is a fit baſis for a diſcourſe upon the dominion of God, and the obſervation will be this.

Doctrine.—God is ſovereign Lord and King, and exerciſeth a dominion over the whole world both heaven and earth.

There is a threefold dominion of God.

1. Natural, which is abſolute over all creatures, and is founded in the nature of God as Creator.

2. Spiritual or gracious, which is a dominion over his church as redeemed, and founded in the covenant of grace.

3. A glorious kingdom at the winding up of all, wherein he ſhall reign over all, either in the glory of his mercy, as over the glorified ſaints; or in the glory

glory of his juſtice in the condemned devils, and men. The firſt dominion is founded in nature. The ſecond in grace. The third in regard of the bleſſed in grace; in regard of the damned, in demerit in them, and juſtice in him.

He is Lord of all things, and always in regard of propriety. Pſa. xxiv. 1, *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, the world, and all that dwell therein.* The earth with the riches and treaſures in the bowels of it; the habitable world with every thing that moves upon it, are his; he hath the ſole right, and what right ſoever any others have, is derived from him. In regard alſo of poſſeſſion, Gen. xiv. 22, *The moſt high God, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth.* In reſpect of whom, man is not the proprietary nor poſſeſſor, but uſufructuary at the will of this grand Lord.

In the proſecution of this,

1. I ſhall lay down ſome general propoſitions for the clearing and confirming it.

2. I ſhall ſhew wherein this right of dominion is founded.

3. What the nature of it is.

4. Wherein it conſiſts; and how it is manifeſted.

Firſt, Some general propoſitions for the clearing and confirming of it.

1. We muſt know the difference between the might or power of God, and his authority.—We commonly mean by the power of God the ſtrength of God, whereby he is able to effect all his purpoſes. By the authority of God, we mean the right he hath to act what he pleaſes. Omnipotence is his phyſical power, whereby he is able to do what he will. Dominion is his moral power, whereby it is lawful for him to do what he will. Among men, ſtrength and authority are two diſtinct things. A ſubject may be a giant, and be ſtronger than his prince, but he hath not the ſame authority as his prince. Worldly dominion may be ſeated not in a brawny

brawny arm, but in a ſickly and infirm body. As knowledge and wiſdom are diſtinguiſhed; knowledge reſpects the matter, being, and nature of a thing; wiſdom reſpects the harmony, order, and actual uſefulneſs of a thing. Knowledge ſearcheth the nature of a thing, and wiſdom employs that thing to its proper uſe. A man may have much knowledge, and little wiſdom, ſo a man may have much ſtrength, and little or no authority. A greater ſtrength may be ſettled in the ſervant, but a greater authority reſides in the maſter; ſtrength is the natural vigor of a man. God hath an infinite ſtrength, he hath a ſtrength to bring to paſs whatſoever he decrees; he acts without fainting and weakneſs, Iſa. xl. 28, and impairs not his ſtrength by the exerciſe of it. As God is Lord he hath a right to enact; as he is almighty, he hath a power to execute. His ſtrength is the executive power belonging to his dominion: in regard of his ſovereignty he hath a right to command all creatures. In regard of his almightineſs he hath a power to make his commands be obeyed; or to puniſh men for the violation of them. His power is that whereby he ſubdues all creatures under him, his dominion is that, whereby he hath a right to ſubdue all creatures under him.

This dominion is a right of making what he pleaſes, of poſſeſſing what he made, of diſpoſing of what he doth poſſeſs; whereas his power is an ability to make, what he hath a right to create, to hold what he doth poſſeſs, and to execute the manner, wherein he reſolves to diſpoſe of his creatures.

2. All the other attributes of God refer to this perfection of dominion.—They all beſpeak him fit for it, and are diſcovered in the exerciſe of it, (which hath been manifeſted in the diſcourſes of thoſe attributes, we have paſſed through hitherto.) His goodneſs fits him for it, becauſe he can never uſe his authority but for the good of the creatures, and

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conducting them to their true end. His wiſdom can never be miſtaken in the exerciſe of it; his power can accompliſh the decrees, that flow from his abſolute authority. What can be more rightful, than the placing authority in ſuch an infinite goodneſs, that hath bowels to pity, as well as a ſceptre to ſway his ſubjects? that hath a mind to contrive, and a will to regulate his contrivances for his own glory, and his creatures good; and an arm of power to bring to paſs, what he orders. Without this dominion, ſome perfections, as juſtice, and mercy, would lie in obſcurity, and much of his wiſdom would be ſhrouded from our ſight and knowledge.

3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all.—The high prieſt was to wave the offering, or ſhake it to and fro, Exod. xxix. 24, which the Jews ſay, was cuſtomarily from eaſt to weſt, and from north to ſouth, the four quarters of the world, to ſignify God's ſovereignty over all the parts of the world. And ſome of the heathens in their adorations turned their bodies to all quarters, to ſignify the extenſive dominion of God throughout the whole earth. That dominion did of right pertain to the deity, was confeſt by the heathen in the name Baal, given to their idols, which ſignifies Lord; and was not a name of one idol, adored for a god, but common to all the eaſtern idols. God hath interwoven the notion of his ſovereignty in the nature and conſtitution of man, in the nobleſt and moſt inward acts of his ſoul, in that faculty or act which is moſt neceſſary for him, in his converſe in this world either with God or man. It is ſtamped upon the conſcience of man, and flaſhes in his face in every act of ſelf-judgment conſcience paſſes upon a man. Every reflection of conſcience implies an obligation of man to ſome law written in his heart, Rom. ii. 15. This law cannot be without a legiſlator, nor this legiſlator without a ſovereign dominion; theſe are

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but natural, and eaſy conſequences in the mind of man from every act of conſcience. The indelible authority of conſcience in man, in the whole exerciſe of it, bears a reſpect to the ſovereignty of God, clearly proclaims not only a ſupreme being, but a ſupreme governor, and points man directly to it, that a man may as ſoon deny his having ſuch a reflecting principle within him, as deny God's dominion over him, and conſequently over the whole world of rational creatures.

4. This notion of ſovereignty is inſeparable from the notion of a God.—To acknowledge the exiſtence of a God, and to acknowledge him a rewarder are linked together, Heb. xi. 6. To acknowledge him a rewarder, is to acknowledge him a governor: rewards being the marks of dominion. The very name of a God includes in it a ſupremacy, and an actual rule. He cannot be conceived as God, but he muſt be conceived as the higheſt authority in the world. It is as poſſible for him not to be God, as not to be ſupreme. Wherein can the exerciſe of his excellencies be apparent, but in his ſovereign rule? To fancy an infinite power without a ſupreme dominion, is to fancy a mighty ſenſeleſs ſtatue fit to be beheld, but not fit to be obeyed; as not being able or having no right to give out orders, or not caring for the exerciſe of it. God cannot be ſuppoſed to be the chief being, but he muſt be ſuppoſed to give laws to all, and receive laws from none. And if we ſuppoſe him with a perfection of juſtice and righteouſneſs (which we muſt do, unleſs we would make a lame and imperfect God) we muſt ſuppoſe him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifeſt his juſtice. And without a ſupreme dominion, he could not manifeſt the ſupremacy, and infiniteneſs of his righteouſneſs.

Secondly, Wherein the dominion of God is founded.

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1. On the excellency of his nature.—Indeed a bare excellency of nature beſpeaks a fitneſs for government, but doth not properly convey a right of government. Excellency ſpeaks aptitude, not title: a ſubject may have more wiſdom than the prince, and be fitter to hold the reins of government, but he hath not a title to royalty. A man of large capacity, and ſtrong virtue, is fit to ſerve his country in parliament, but the election of the people conveys a title to him. Yet a ſtrain of intellectual and moral abilities beyond others, is a foundation for dominion. And it is commonly ſeen that ſuch eminences in men, though they do not inveſt them with a civil authority, or an authority of juriſdiction, yet they create a veneration in the minds of men; their virtue attracts reverence, and their advice is regarded as an oracle. Old men by their age, when ſtored with more wiſdom and knowledge by reaſon of their long experience, acquire a kind of power over the younger in their dictates and counſels, ſo that they gain by the ſtrength of that excellency a real authority in the minds of thoſe men they converſe with, and poſſeſs themſelves of a deep reſpect from them. God therefore being an incomprehenſible ocean of all perfection, and poſſeſſing infinitely all thoſe virtues, that may lay a claim to dominion, hath the firſt foundation of it in his own nature. His incomparable and unparalleled excellency, as well as the greatneſs of his work, attracts the voluntary worſhip of him as a ſovereign Lord. Pſa. lxxxvi. 8. *Among the gods there is none like unto thee, neither are there any works like unto thy work. All nations ſhall come and worſhip before thee.* Though his benefits are great engagements to our obedience, and affection, yet his infinite majeſty and perfection require the firſt place in our acknowledgements and adorations. Upon this account God claims it, Iſa. lxvi. 9. *I am God, and there is none like me, I will do all my pleaſure:* and the prophet Jeremy upon the

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ſame account acknowledgeth it. Jer. x. 6, 7, *Foraſmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain: foraſmuch as there is none like unto thee.* And this is a more noble title of dominion, it being an uncreated title, and more eminent than that of creation or preſervation. This is the natural order, God hath placed in his creatures, that the more excellent ſhould rule the inferior. He committed not the government of lower creatures to lions and tigers, that have a delight in blood, but no knowledge of virtue; but to man, who had an eminence in his nature above other creatures, and was formed with a perfect rectitude, and a height of reaſon to guide the reins over them. In man, the ſoul being of a more ſublime nature, is ſet of right to rule over the body; the mind, the moſt excellent faculty of the ſoul, to rule over the other powers of it; and wiſdom the moſt excellent habit of the mind, to guide and regulate that in its determinations; and when the body and ſenſitive appetite controul the ſoul and mind, it is an uſurpation againſt nature, not a rule according to nature; the excellency therefore of the divine nature is the natural foundation for his dominion. He hath wiſdom to know what is fit for him to do, and an immutable righteouſneſs whereby he cannot do any thing baſe and unworthy. He hath a fore-knowledge whereby he is able to order all things to anſwer his own glorious deſigns, and the end of his government; that nothing can go wrong, nothing put him to a ſtand, and conſtrain him to meditate new counſels. So that if it could be ſuppoſed, that the world had not been created by him, that the parts of it had met together by chance, and been compacted into ſuch a body; none but God, the ſupreme and moſt excellent being in the world, could have merited, and deſervedly challenged the government of

it: becauſe nothing had an excellency of nature, to capacitate it for it, as he hath, or to enter into a conteſt with him for a ſufficiency to govern.

2. It is founded in his act of creation.—He is the ſovereign Lord, as he is the almighty Creator. The relation of an entire Creator, induceth the relation of an abſolute Lord; he that gives being, life, motion, that is the ſole cauſe of the being of a thing, which was before nothing, that hath nothing to concur with him, nor to aſſiſt him, but by his ſole power commands it to ſtand up into being, is the unqueſtionable lord and proprietor of that thing, that hath no dependance but upon him. And by this act of creation which extended to all things, he became univerſal ſovereign over all things. And thoſe that wave the excellency of his nature as the foundation of his government, eaſily acknowledge the ſufficiency of it upon his actual creation. His dominion of juriſdiction reſults from creation. When God himſelf makes an oration in defence of his ſovereignty, Job xxxviii. his chief arguments are drawn from creation, and Pſa. xcv. 3, 5, *The Lord is a great King above all gods, the ſea is his and he made it.* And ſo the apoſtle in his ſermon to the Athenians. As he *made the world and all things therein*, he is ſtiled *Lord of heaven and earth*, Acts xvii. 24. His dominion alſo of property ſtands upon this baſis, Pſa. lxxxix. 7, *The heavens are thine, the earth alſo is thine, as for the world and the fulneſs thereof thou haſt founded them.* Upon this title of forming Iſrael as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their ſervice to him as their ſovereign. *O Jacob and Iſrael, thou art my ſervant, I have formed thee, thou art my ſervant, O Iſrael,* Iſa. xliv. 21. The ſovereignty of God naturally ariſeth from the relation of all things to himſelf as their entire creator, and their natural and inſeparable dependance upon him in regard of their being, and well beings. It depends not upon the election of men; God hath

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a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he hath a dominion by conſent over us as converts. As ſoon as ever any thing began to be a creature, it was a vaſſal to God, as a Lord. Every man is acknowledged to have a right of poſſeſſing what he hath made, and a power of dominion over what he hath framed. He may either cheriſh his own work, or daſh it in pieces: he may either add a greater comelineſs to it, or deface what he hath already imparted. He hath a right of property in it; no other man can without injury pilfer his own work from him. The work hath no propriety in itſelf: the right muſt lie in the immediate framer, or in the perſon that employed him. The firſt cauſe of every thing hath an unqueſtionable dominion of propriety in it upon the ſcore of juſtice. By the law of nations, the firſt finder of a country, is eſteemed the rightful poſſeſſor, and lord of that country, and the firſt inventor of an art hath a right of exerciſing it. If a man hath a juſt claim of dominion over that thing, whoſe materials were not of his framing, but from only the addition of a new figure from his ſkill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the colours wherewith he draws it, were ever endued by him with their diſtinct qualities, but only he applies them by his art, to compoſe ſuch a figure; much more hath God a rightful claim of dominion over his creatures, whoſe entire being both in matter and form, and every particle of their excellency was breathed out by the word of his mouth. He did not only give the matter a form, but beſtowed upon the matter itſelf a being; it was formed by none to his hand, as the matter is on which an artiſt works. He had the being of all things in his own power, and it was at his choice whether he would impart it or no; there can be no juſter, and ſtronger ground of a claim than this. A man hath a right to a piece of braſs, or gold, by his purchaſe, but when by his engraving he hath formed

it into an excellent ſtatue, there reſults an increaſe of his right upon the account of his artifice. God's creation of the matter of man gave him a right over man; but his creation of him in ſo eminent an excellency, with reaſon to guide him, a clear eye of underſtanding to diſcern light from darkneſs, and truth from falſhood, a freedom of will to act accordingly, and an original righteouſneſs as the varniſh and beauty of all: here is the ſtrongeſt foundation for a claim of authority over man, and the ſtrongeſt obligation on man for ſubjection to God. If all thoſe things had been paſt over to God by another hand, he could not be the ſupreme Lord, nor could have an abſolute right to diſpoſe of them at his pleaſure: that would have been the invaſion of another's right. Beſides, creation is the only firſt diſcovery of his dominion. Before the world was framed there was nothing but God himſelf, and properly nothing is ſaid to have dominion over itſelf; this is a relative attribute, reflecting on the works of God. He had a right of dominion in his nature from eternity, but before creation he was actually Lord only of a nullity: where there is nothing, it can have no relation; nothing is not the ſubject of poſſeſſion, nor of dominion. There could be no exerciſe of this dominion without creation; what exerciſe can a ſovereign have without ſubjects? Sovereignty ſpeaks a relation to ſubjects; and none is properly a ſovereign without ſubjects. To conclude, from hence doth reſult God's univerſal dominion: for being maker of all, he is the ruler of all. And his perpetual dominion: for as long as God continues in the relation of Creator, the right of his ſovereignty as creator cannot be aboliſhed.

3. As God is the final cauſe, or end of all, he is Lord of all.—The end hath a greater ſovereignty in actions, than the actor hath itſelf: the actor hath a ſovereignty over others in action, but the end for which any one works hath a ſovereignty over the agent

agent himſelf. A limner hath a ſovereignty over the picture he is framing, or hath framed, but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he deſigned from it, or the honour and credit of ſkill he aimed at in it, hath a dominion over the limner himſelf. The end moves, and excites the artiſt to work, it ſpirits him in it, conducts him in his whole buſineſs, poſſeſſes his mind, and ſits triumphant in him all the progreſs of his work; it is the firſt cauſe for which the whole work is wrought. Now God in his actual creation of all, is the ſovereign end of all; *for thy pleaſure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. *The Lord hath made all things for himſelf*, Prov. xvi. 4. Man indeed is the ſubordinate and immediate end of the lower creation; and therefore had the dominion over other creatures granted to him. But God being the ultimate and principal end, hath the ſovereign and principal dominion; all things as much refer to him as the laſt end, as they flow from him as the firſt cauſe. So that as I ſaid before, if the world had been compacted together by a jumbling chance without a wiſe hand, as ſome have fooliſhly imagined, none could have been an antagoniſt with God for the government of the world, but God in regard of the excellency of his nature would have been the rector of it, unleſs thoſe atoms that had compoſed the world, had had an ability to govern it. Since there could be no univerſal end of all things but God, God only can claim an entire right to the government of it: for though man be the end of the lower creation, yet man is not the end of himſelf, and his own being; he is not the end of the creation of the ſupreme heavens; he is not able to govern them, they are out of his ken, and out of his reach. None fit in regard of the excellency of nature, to be the chief end of the whole world but God: and therefore none can have a right to the dominion of it but God. In this regard, God's dominion differs from the dominion of all earthly

potentates. All the ſubjects in creation were made for God as their end, ſo are not people for rulers, but rulers made for people for their protection, and the preſervation of order in ſocieties.

Thirdly, The nature of this dominion.

This dominion is independent.—His throne is in the heavens; the heavens depend not upon the earth, nor God upon his creatures. Since he is independent in regard of his eſſence, he is ſo in his dominion, which flows from the excellency and fulneſs of his eſſence. As he receives his eſſence from none, ſo he derives his dominion from none. All other dominion, except paternal authority, is rooted originally in the wills of men. The firſt title was the conſent of the people, or the conqueſt of others by the help of thoſe people that firſt conſented. And in the exerciſe of it, earthly dominion depends upon aſſiſtance of the ſubjects, and the members being joined with the head, carry on the work of government, and prevent civil diſſentions; in the ſupport of it, it depends upon the ſubjects contributions, and taxes. The ſubjects in their ſtrength are the arms, and in their purſes the ſinews of government. But God depends upon none in the foundation of his government; he is not a Lord by the votes of his vaſſals; nor is it ſucceſſively handed to him by any predeceſſor, nor conſtituted by the power of a ſuperior: nor forced he his way by war, and conqueſt, nor precariouſly attained it by ſuit or flattery, or bribing promiſes. He holds not the right of his empire from any other; he hath no ſuperior to hand him to his throne, and ſettle him by commiſſion. He is therefore called *King of Kings*, and *Lord of Lords*, having none above him. *A great King above all Gods*, Pſa. xcv. 3, needing no licence from any when to act, nor direction how to act, or aſſiſtance in his action: he owes not any of thoſe to any perſon; he was not ordered by any other to create, and therefore receives not orders from

from any other to rule over what he hath created. He received not his power and wiſdom from another, and therefore is not ſubject to any for the rule of his government. He only made his own ſubjects, and from himſelf hath the ſole authority; his own will was the cauſe of their beings, and his own will is the director of their actions. He is not determined by his creatures, in any of his motions, but determine the creatures in all. His actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature. It is impoſſible he can have any rule without himſelf: becauſe there is nothing ſuperior to himſelf. Nor doth he depend upon any in the exerciſe of his government; he needs no ſervants in it; when he uſes creatures, it is not out of want of their help, but for the manifeſtation of his wiſdom and power. What he doth by his ſubjects, he can do by himſelf: *The government is upon his ſhoulders*, Iſa. ix. 6, to ſhew that he needs not any ſupporters. All other governments flow from him, all other authorities depend upon him; *Dei gratia*, or *Dei providentia*, is in the ſtile of princes. As their being is derived from his power, ſo their authority is but a branch of his dominion. They are governors by divine providence; God is governor by his ſole nature. All motions depend upon the firſt heaven, which moves all; but that depends upon nothing. The government of Chriſt depends upon God's uncreated dominion, and is by commiſſion from him; Chriſt aſſumed not this honour to himſelf. *But he that ſaid unto him, thou art my Son*, beſtowed it upon him. *He put all things under his feet*, but not himſelf. 1 Cor. xv. 27, *When he ſaith all things are put under him, he is excepted which did put all things under him.* He ſits ſtill as an independent governor upon his throne.

This dominion is abſolute.—If his throne be in the heavens, there is nothing to controul him. If

he be independent, he muſt needs be abſolute; ſince he hath no cauſe in conjunction with him as Creator, that can ſhare with him in his right, or reſtrain him in the diſpoſal of his creature. His authority is unlimited; in this regard, the title of Lord becomes not any but God properly. Tiberius, thought none of the beſt, though one of the ſubtileſt princes, accounted the title of Lord a reproach to him: ſince he was not abſolute.

Yet this dominion, though it be abſolute, is not tyrannical, but it is managed by the rules of wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs.—If his throne be in the heavens, it is pure, and good: becauſe the heavens are the pureſt parts of the creation, and influence by their goodneſs the lower earth. Since he is his own rule, and his nature is infinitely wiſe, holy, and righteous, he cannot do a thing, but what is unqueſtionably agreeable with wiſdom, juſtice and purity. In all the exerciſes of his ſovereign right, he is never unattended with thoſe perfections of his nature. Might not God by his abſolute power have pardoned mens' guilt, and thrown the invading ſin out of his creatures? But in regard of his truth, pawned in his threatening, and in regard of his juſtice, which demanded ſatisfaction, he would not. Might not God by his abſolute ſovereignty, admit a man into his friendſhip, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of ſuch an act to his wiſdom and holineſs, he will not. May he not, by his abſolute power, refuſe to accept a man, that deſires to pleaſe him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of his goodneſs and righteouſneſs, he will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not neceſſary in regard of God's ſovereignty, that he ſhould love it; but in regard of his goodneſs it is neceſſary, and he will never do otherwiſe. As God never acts to the utmoſt of his power, ſo he never exerts the utmoſt of his ſovereignty:

ſovereignty: becauſe it would be inconſiſtent with thoſe other properties, which render him perfectly adorable to the creature. As no intelligent creature, neither angel nor man, can be framed without a law in his nature, ſo we cannot imagine God without a law in his own nature, unleſs we would fancy him a rude, tyrannical, fooliſh being, that had nothing of holineſs, goodneſs, righteouſneſs, or wiſdom. If he *made the heavens in wiſdom*, Pſa. cxxxvi. 5, he made them by ſome rule, not by a mere will, but a rule within himſelf, not without. A wiſe work is never the reſult of an abſolute unguided will.

This dominion is managed by the rule of wiſdom. —What may appear to us, to have no other ſpring than abſolute ſovereignty, would be found to have a depth of amazing wiſdom, and accountable reaſon, were our ſhort capacities long enough to fathom it. When the apoſtle had been diſcourſing of the eternal counſels of God, in ſeizing upon one man, and letting go another, in rejecting the Jews, and gathering in the Gentiles, which appears to us to be reſults only of an abſolute dominion, yet he reſolves not thoſe amazing acts into that, without taking it for granted, that they were governed by exact wiſdom, though beyond his ken to ſee, and his line to ſound. Rom. xi. 33, *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God; how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* There are ſome things in matters of ſtate, that may ſeem to be acts of mere will, but if we were acquainted with the *arcana imperii*, the inward engines which moved them, and the ends aimed at in thoſe undertakings, we might find a rich vein of prudence in them, to incline us to judge otherwiſe than bare arbitrary proceedings. The other attributes of power and goodneſs are more eaſily perceptible in the works of God, than his

his wiſdom. The firſt view of the creation ſtrikes us with this ſentiment, that the author of this great fabric was mighty, and beneficial; but his wiſdom lies deeper, than to be diſcerned at the firſt glance without a diligent enquiry. As at the firſt caſting our eyes upon the ſea, we behold its motion, colour, and ſomething of its vaſtneſs, but we cannot preſently fathom the depth of it, and underſtand thoſe lower fountains, that ſupply that great ocean of waters: it is part of God's ſovereignty, as it is of the wiſeſt princes, that he hath a wiſdom beyond the reach of his ſubjects; it is not for a finite nature to underſtand an infinite wiſdom, not for a fooliſh creature that hath loſt his underſtanding by the fall, to judge of the reaſon of the methods of a wiſe counſellor. Yet thoſe actions that ſavor moſt of ſovereignty, preſent men with ſome glances of his wiſdom. Was it mere will, that he ſuffered ſome angels to fall? But his wiſdom was in it for the manifeſtation of his juſtice; as it was alſo in the caſe of Pharaoh. Was it mere will, that he ſuffered ſin to be committed by man? was not his wiſdom in this for the diſcovery of his mercy, which never had been known without that, which ſhould render a creature miſerable? Rom. xi. 32, *He hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* Though God had ſuch an abſolute right, to have annihilated the world, as ſoon as ever he had made it, yet how had this conſiſted with his wiſdom, to have erected a creature after his own image one day, and deſpiſed it ſo much the next, as to caſhier it from being? What wiſdom had it been, to make a thing, only to deſtroy it? To repent of his work as ſoon as ever it came out of his hands, without any occaſion offered by the creature. If God be ſuppoſed to be creator, he muſt be ſuppoſed to have an end in creation; what end can that be but himſelf and his own glory, the manifeſtation of the perfections of his nature? What perfection could have been

been diſcovered in ſo quick an annihilation, but that of his power in creating, and of his ſovereignty in ſnatching away the being of his rational creature, before it had laid the methods of acting? What wiſdom to make a world, and a reaſonable creature for no uſe? not to praiſe, and honour him, but to be broken in pieces, and deſtroyed by him?

His ſovereignty is managed according to the rule of righteouſneſs. Worldly princes often fancy tyranny and oppreſſion to be the chief marks of ſovereignty, and think their ſceptres not beautiful, till died in blood, nor the throne ſecure, till eſtabliſhed upon ſlain carcaſſes. But *juſtice and judgment are the foundation of the throne* of God, Pſa. lxxxix. 14. Alluding perhaps to the ſupporters of arms, and thrones, which among princes are the figures of lions, emblems of courage, as Soloman had, 1 Kings x. 19. But God makes not ſo much might, as right the ſupport of his. He ſits on a *throne of holineſs*, Pſa, xlvii. 8. As he reigns over the heathens, referring to the calling of the Gentiles after the rejecting the Jews; the pſalmiſt here praiſing the righteouſneſs of it, as the apoſtle had the unſearchable wiſdom of it, Rom. xi. 33. *In all his ways he is righteous*, Pſa. cxlv. 17. In his ways of terror, as well as thoſe of ſweetneſs; in thoſe works wherein little elſe but that of his ſovereignty appears to us. It is always linked with his holineſs, that he will not do by his abſolute right any thing but what is conformable to it: ſince his dominion is founded upon the excellency of his nature, he will not do any thing but what is agreeable to it, and becoming his other perfections. Though he be an abſolute ſovereign, he is not an arbitary governor; *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25, *i. e.* it is impoſſible, but he ſhould act righteouſly in every punctilio of his government, ſince his righteouſneſs capacitates him to be a judge, not a tyrant of all the

the earth. The heathen poets repreſented their chief god, Jupiter with Themis, or right, ſitting by him upon his throne in all his orders. God cannot by his abſolute ſovereignty command ſome things: becauſe they are directly againſt unchangeable righteouſneſs as to command a creature to hate, or blaſpheme the Creator, not to own him, nor praiſe him. It would be a manifeſt unrighteouſneſs, to order the creature not to own him, upon whom he depends both in its being and well being: this would be againſt that natural duty, which is indiſpenſibly due from every rational creature to God. This would be to order him, to lay aſide his reaſon while he retains it, to diſown him to be the Creator, while man remains his creature. This is repugnant to the nature of God, and the true nature of the creature: or to exact any thing of man, but what he had given him a capacity, in his original nature to perform. If any command were above our natural power, it would be unrighteous; as to command a man to graſp the globe of the earth, to ſtride over the ſea, to lave out the waters of the ocean; theſe thing are impoſſible, and become not the righteouſneſs and wiſdom of God to enjoin. There can be no obligation on man to an impoſſibility. God had a free dominion over nullity before the creation, he could call it out into the being of man and beaſt: but he could not do any thing in creation fooliſhly becauſe of his infinite wiſdom; nor could he by the right of his abſolute ſovereignty make man ſinful, becauſe of his infinite purity. As it is impoſſible for him not to be ſovereign; it is impoſſible for him to deny his deity, and his purity. It is lawful for God to do what he will, but his will being ordered by the righteouſneſs of his nature, as infinite as his will, he cannot do any thing but what is juſt; and therefore in his dealing with men, you find him in ſcripture ſubmitting the reaſonableneſs and equity of his proceedings to the judgment of his depraved creatures,

and

and the inward dictates of their own conſciences, Iſa. v. 3, *And now, O inhabitants of Jeruſalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you, between me and my vineyard.* Though God be the great ſovereign of the world, yet he acts not in a way of abſolute ſovereignty.

He rules by law, he is a Lawgiver, as well as a King, Iſa. xxxiii. 22. It had been repugnant to the nature of a rational creature to be ruled otherwiſe; to be governed as a beaſt, this had been to fruſtrate thoſe faculties of will and underſtanding, which had been given him. To conclude this; when we ſay, God can do this or that, or command this or that, his authority is not bounded, and limited properly. Who can reaſonably detract from his almightineſs, becauſe he cannot do any thing which ſavors of weakneſs; and what detracting is it from his authority, that he cannot do any thing unſeemly for the dignity of his nature? It is rather from the infiniteneſs of his righteouſneſs than the ſtraitneſs of his authority; at moſt, it is but a voluntary bounding his dominion by the law of his own holineſs.

His ſovereignty is managed according to the rule of goodneſs.—Some potentates there have been in the world, that have loved to ſuck the blood, and drink the tears of their ſubjects; that would rule more by fear than love, like Clearchus the tyrant of Heraclia, who bore the figure of a thunderbolt inſtead of a ſceptre, and named his ſon Thunder; thereby to tutor him to terrify his ſubjects. But as God's throne is a throne of holineſs, ſo it is a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. A throne encircled with a rainbow. Rev. iv. 23, *In ſight like to an emerald.* An emblem of the covenant, that hath the pleaſantneſs of a green colour, delightful to the eye, betokening mercy. Though his nature be infinitely excellent above us, and his power infinitely tranſcendant over us, yet the majeſty of his government is tempered with an unſpeakable goodneſs. He acts

not

not ſo much as an abſolute lord, as a gracious ſovereign and obliging benefactor. He delights not to make his ſubjects ſlaves. Exacts not of them any ſervile and fearful, but a generous and chearful obedience. He requires them not to fear or worſhip him ſo much for his power as his goodneſs. He requires not of a rational creature any thing repugnant to the honour, dignity, and principles of ſuch a nature; not any thing that may ſhame, diſgrace it, and make it weary of its own being, and the ſervice it owes to its ſovereign. He draws by the cords of a man; his goodneſs renders his law as ſweet as honey or the honey-comb to an unvitiated palate, and a renewed mind. And though it be granted, he hath a full diſpoſe of his creature, as the potter of his veſſel, and might by his abſolute ſovereignty inflict upon an innocent an eternal torment, yet his goodneſs will never permit him to uſe this ſovereign right to the hurt of a creature, that deſerves it not. If God ſhould caſt an innocent creature into the furnace of his wrath, who can queſtion him? But who can think, that his goodneſs will do ſo? ſince that is as infinite as his authority? As not to puniſh the ſinner, would be a denial of his juſtice, ſo to torment an innocent, would be a denial of his goodneſs. A man hath an abſolute power over his beaſt, and may take away his life, and put him to a great deal of pain; but that moral virtue of pity and tenderneſs would not permit him to uſe this right, but when it conduceth to ſome greater good, than that can be evil; either for the good of man which is the end of the creature, or for the good of the poor beaſt itſelf, to rid him of a greater miſery: None but a ſavage nature, a diſpoſition to be abhorred, would torture a poor beaſt merely for his pleaſure. It is as much againſt the nature of God, to puniſh one eternally, that hath not deſerved it, as it is to deny himſelf, and act any thing fooliſhly, and unbeſeeming his other perfections, which render

render him majeſtical, and adorable. To afflict an innocent creature for his own good, or for the good of the world, as in the caſe of the Redeemer, is ſo far from being againſt goodneſs, that it is the higheſt teſtimony of his tender bowels to the ſons of men. God, though he be mighty, *withdraws not his eyes*, i. e. his tender reſpect *from the righteous*, Job xxxiv. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10. And if he bind them in fetters, it is to ſhew them their tranſgreſſions, and open their ear to diſcipline, and renewing commands in a more ſenſible ſtrain, to depart from iniquity. What was ſaid of Fabritius, "you may as ſoon remove the ſun from its courſe, as Fabritius from his honeſty;" may be of God, you may as ſoon daſh in pieces his throne, as ſeparate his goodneſs from his ſovereignty.

This ſovereignty is extenſive over all creatures. —He rules all, as the heavens do over the earth. He is King of worlds, King of ages, as the word tranſlated *eternal* ſignifies, 1 Tim. i. 17. and the ſame word is ſo tranſlated, Heb. i. 2, *By whom alſo he made the worlds:* the ſame word is rendered worlds, Heb. xi. 3, *The worlds were framed by the word of God.* God is King of ages or worlds, of the inviſible world, and the ſenſible, of all from the beginning of their creation, of whatſoever is meaſured by a time. It extends over angels and devils, over wicked and good, over rational and irrational creatures; all things bow down under his hand, nothing can be exempted from him, becauſe there is nothing but was extracted by him from nothing into being. All things eſſentially depend upon him, and therefore muſt be eſſentially ſubject to him: the extent of his dominion flows from the perfection of his eſſence; ſince his eſſence is unlimited, his royality cannot be reſtrained. His authority is as void of any imperfection, as his eſſence is; it reaches out to all points of the heaven above, and the earth below. Other princes reign in a ſpot of ground. Every worldly potentate hath the confines of his dominion.

dominions. The Pyrean Mountains divide France from Spain, and the Alps, Italy from France. None are called kings abſolutely, but kings of this or that place. But God is *the King*, the ſpacious firmament limits not his dominion. If we could ſuppoſe him bounded by any place in regard of his preſence, yet he could never be out of his own dominion; whatſoever he looks upon, whereſoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may ſtep out of their own country into the territory of a neighbouring prince; and as one leaves his country, ſo he leaves his dominion behind him; but heaven and earth, and every particle of both, is the territory of God. *He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

The heaven of angels and other excellent creatures belong to his authority.—He is principally called the Lord of Hoſts, in relation to his entire command over the angelical legions: therefore, ver. 21, following the text, they are called his *hoſts, and miniſters that do his pleaſure.* Jacob called him ſo before, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2, when he met the angels of God, he calls them *the hoſt of God*; and the evangeliſt long after calls them ſo, Luke ii. 13, *A multitude of the heavenly hoſt praiſing God*, and all this hoſt he commands. Iſa. xlv. 12, *My hands have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded.* He employs them all in his ſervice, and when he iſſues out his orders to them, to do this or that, he finds no reſiſtance of his will.

And the inanimate creatures in heaven are at his beck, they are his armies in heaven, diſpoſed in an excellent order in their ſeveral ranks, Pſa. cxlvii. 4, *He calls the ſtars by name*; they render a due obedience to him, as ſervants to their maſter; when he ſingles them out, and calls them by name, to do ſome ſpecial ſervice, he calls them out to their ſeveral offices, as the general of an army appoints the ſtation of every regiment in a battalia.

Or

Or he calls them by name, *i. e.* he impoſeth names upon them, a ſign of dominion. The giving names to the inferior creatures being the firſt act of Adam's derivative dominion over them. Theſe are under the ſovereignty of God. The ſtars by their influences fight againſt Siſera, Judg. v. 20; and the ſun holds in its reins, and ſtands ſtone ſtill, to light Joſhua to a complete victory, Joſh. x. 12. They are all marſhalled in their ranks, to receive his word of command, and fight in cloſe order, as being deſirous to have a ſhare in the ruin of the enemies of their Sovereign. And thoſe creatures which mount up from the earth, and take their place in the lower heavens, vapors whereof hail and ſnow are formed, are part of the army, and do not only receive, but fulfil his word of command, Pſa. cxlviii. 8. Theſe are his ſtores and magazines of judgment againſt a time of trouble, and *a day of battle aud war*, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. The ſovereignty of God is viſible in all their motions, in their going and returning. If he ſays go, they go, if he ſays come, they come, if he ſays do this, they gird up their loins, and ſtand ſtiff to their duty.

The hell of devils belong to his authority.—They have caſt themſelves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his juſtice; they have by their revolt forfeited the treaſure of his goodneſs, but cannot exempt themſelves from the ſceptre of his dominion; when they would not own him as a Lord Father, they are under him as Lord Judge, they are caſt out of his affection, but not freed from his yoke. He rules over the good angels as his ſubjects, over the evil ones as his rebels. In whatſoever relation he ſtands, either as a friend or enemy, he never loſes that of a Lord. A prince is the lord of his criminals, as well as of his loyaleſt ſubjects. By this right of his ſovereignty, he uſes them to puniſh ſome, and be the occaſion of benefit to others; on the wicked he employs them as in-

ſtruments of vengeance, towards the godly, as in the caſe of Job, as an inſtrument of kindneſs for the manifeſtation of his ſincerity, againſt the intention of that malicious executioner. Though the devils are the executioners of his juſtice, it is not by their own authority, but God's; as thoſe that are employed either to rack or execute a malefactor, are ſubjects to the prince, not only in the quality of men, but in the execution of their function. The devil by drawing men to ſin, acquires no right to himſelf over the ſinner: for man by ſin offends not the devil, but God; and becomes guilty of puniſhment under God. When therefore the devil is uſed by God for the puniſhment of any, it is an act of his ſovereignty for the manifeſtation of the order of his juſtice. And as moſt nations uſe the vileſt perſons in offices of execution, ſo doth God thoſe vile ſpirits. He doth not ordinarily uſe the good angels in thoſe offices of vengeance, but in the preſervation of his people. When he would ſolely puniſh, he employs evil angels, Pſa. lxxviii. 49; a troop of devils. His ſovereignty is extended over the deceiver and the deceived, Job. xii. 16; over both the malefactor and the executioner, the devil and his priſoner. He uſeth the natural malice of the devils for his own juſt ends, and by his ſovereign authority orders them to be the executioners of his judgments upon their own vaſſals, as well as ſometimes inflicters of puniſhments upon his own ſervants.

The earth of men, and other creatures belong to his authority.—Pſa. xlvii. 7. God is King of all the earth, and rules to the ends of it, Pſa. lix. 13. Ancient atheiſts confined God's dominion to the heavenly orbs, and bounded it within the circuit of the celeſtial ſphere, Job xxii. 14, *He walks in the circuit of heaven*, i. e. he exerciſeth his dominion only there. *Pedumpoſitio* was the ſign of the poſſeſſion of a piece of land, and the dominion of the poſſeſſor

poſſeſſor of it; and land was reſigned by ſuch a ceremony, as now by the delivery of a twig or turf.

Fourthly, Wherein this dominion and ſovereignty conſiſts, and how it is manifeſted.

The firſt act of ſovereignty is the making laws.—This is eſſential to God; no creature's will can be the firſt rule to the creature, but only the will of God. He only can preſcribe man his duty, and eſtabliſh the rule of it; hence the law is called *the royal law*, Jam. ii. 8, it being the firſt and cleareſt manifeſtation of ſovereignty; as the power of legiſlation is of the authority of a prince. Both are joined together in Iſa. xxxiii. 22, *The Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king*. Legiſlative power being the great mark of royalty. God, as a king, enacts laws by his own proper authority, and his law is a declaration of his own ſovereignty, and of mens moral ſubjection to him, and dependance on him. His ſovereignty doth not appear ſo much in his promiſes as his precepts: a man's power over another is not diſcovered by promiſing: for a promiſe doth not ſuppoſe the promiſer either ſuperior or inferior to the perſon, to whom the promiſe is made. It is not an exerciſing authority over another, but over a man's ſelf. No man forceth another to the acceptance of his promiſe, but only propoſeth, and encourageth to an embracing of it. But commanding ſuppoſeth always an authority in the perſon giving the precept. It obligeth the perſon, to whom the command is directed. A promiſe obligeth the perſon by whom the promiſe is made. God by his command binds the creature, by his promiſe he binds himſelf. He ſtoops below his ſovereignty, to lay obligations upon his own majeſty. By a precept he binds the creature, by a promiſe he encourageth the creature to an obſervance of his precept. What laws God makes, man is bound by virtue of his creation to obſerve; that

reſpects the ſovereignty of God. What promiſes God makes, man is bound to believe, but that reſpects the faithfulneſs of God. God manifeſted his dominion more to the Jews than to any other people in the world; he was their law-giver, both as they were a church and a commonwealth. As a church, he gave them ceremonial laws, for the regulating their worſhip: as a ſtate, he gave them judicial laws, for the ordering their civil affairs; and as both, he gave them moral laws, upon which both the laws of the church, and ſtate were founded.

This dominion of God in this regard will be manifeſt in the ſupremacy of it. The ſole power of making laws doth originally reſide in him. Jam. iv. 12, *There is one Law-giver, who is able to ſave, and to deſtroy.* By his own law he judges of the eternal ſtates of men, and no law of man is obligatory, but as it is agreeable to the laws of this ſupreme Law-giver, and purſuant to his righteous rules for the government of the world. The power that the potentates of the world have to make laws, is but derivative from God. If their dominion be from him, as it is: for *by him kings reign,* Prov. viii. 15: their legiſlative power, which is a prime flower of their ſovereignty, is derived from him alſo. And the apoſtle reſolves it into this original, which he orders us, to be *ſubject to the higher powers not only for wrath but for conſcience ſake,* Rom. xiii. 5. Conſcience in its operations ſolely reſpects God: and therefore when it is exerciſed as the principle of obedience to the laws of men, it is not with a reſpect to them ſingly conſidered, but as the majeſty of God appears in their ſtation and in their decrees. This power of giving laws was acknowledged by the heathen, to be ſolely in God by way of original: and therefore the greateſt law-givers among the heathen, pretended their laws to be received from ſome deity, or ſupernatural power, by ſpecial revelation; now whether

whether they did this ſeriouſly, acknowledging themſelves this part of the dominion of God: (for it is certain, that whatſoever juſt orders were iſſued out by princes in the world, was by the ſecret influence of God upon their ſpirits. Prov. viii. 15, *By me princes decree juſtice*, by the ſecret conduct of divine wiſdom) or whether they pretended it as a publick engine, to enforce upon people the obſervance of their decrees, and gain a greater credit to their edicts, yet this will reſult from it, that the people in general entertained this notion, that God was the great law-giver of the world. The firſt founders of their ſocieties could never elſe have gained upon them by ſuch a pretence. There was always a revelation of a law from the mouth of God in every age: the exhortation of Eliphaz to Job, Job xxii. 22, of receiving a law from the mouth of God at the time before the moral law was publiſhed, had been a vain exhortation, had there been no revelation of the mind of God in all ages.

The dominion of God is manifeſt in the extent of his laws.—As he is the governor and ſovereign of the whole world, ſo he enacts laws for the whole world. One prince cannot make laws for another, unleſs he makes him his ſubject by right of conqueſt. Spain cannot make laws for England, or England for Spain. But God having the ſupreme government as king over all, is a law-giver to all, to irrational, as well as rational creatures. The *heavens have their ordinances*, Job xxxviii. 33. All creatures have a law imprinted on their beings. Rational creatures have divine ſtatutes copied in their heart. For men it is clear. Rom. ii. 14. Every ſon of Adam at his coming into the world, brings with him a law in his nature, and when reaſon clears itſelf up from the clouds of ſenſe, he can make ſome difference between good and evil; diſcern ſomething of fit and juſt. Every man finds a law within him, that checks him, if he offends it.

None are without a legal indictment, and a legal executioner within them; God or none was the author of this as a ſovereign Lord, in eſtabliſhing a law in man at the ſame time, wherein as an almighty Creator he imparted a being. This law proceeds from God's general power of governing, as he is the author of nature, and binds not barely as it is the reaſon of man, but by the authority of God, as it is a law engraven on his conſcience. And no doubt but a law was given to the angels, God did not govern thoſe intellectual creatures as he doth brutes, and in a way inferior to his rule of man. Some ſinned, all might have ſinned in regard of the changeableneſs of their nature. Sin cannot be but againſt ſome rule: where there is no law there is no tranſgreſſion; what that law was, is not revealed, but certainly it muſt be the ſame in part with the moral law, ſo far as it agreed with their ſpiritual natures; a love to God, a worſhip of him, and a love to one another in their ſocieties and perſons.

The dominion of God appears in the obligation of the law, which reacheth the conſcience.—The laws of every prince are framed for the outward conditions of men; they do not by their authority bind the conſcience; and what obligations do reſult from them upon the conſcience, is either from their being the ſame immediately with divine laws, or as they are according to the juſt power of the magiſtrate, founded on the law of God. Conſcience hath a protection from the King of Kings, and cannot be arreſted by any human power. God hath given man but an authority over half the man, and the worſt half too, that which is of an earthly original; but reſerved the authority over the better and more heavenly half to himſelf. The dominion of earthly princes extends only to the bodies of men, they have no authority over the ſoul, their puniſhment and rewards cannot reach it: and therefore their laws by their ſingle authority cannot bind it,

but

but as they are co-incident with the law of God, or as the equity of them is ſubſervient to the preſervation of human ſociety, a regular and righteous thing, which is the divine end in government, and ſo they bind, as they have a relation to God as the ſupreme magiſtrate. The conſcience is only intelligible to God in its ſecret motions; and therefore only guidable by God; God only pierceth into the conſcience by his eye, and therefore only can conduct it by his rule. Man cannot tell whether we embrace this law in our heart and conſciences, or only in appearance. *He only can judge it*, Luke xii. 3, 4, and therefore he only can impoſe laws upon it; it is out of the reach of human penal authority, if their laws be tranſgreſſed inwardly by it. Conſcience is a book in ſome ſort as ſacred as the ſcripture, no addition can be lawfully made to it, no ſubſtraction from it. Men cannot diminiſh the duty of conſcience, or raſe out the law, God had ſtamped upon it. They cannot put a *ſuperſedeas* to the writ of conſcience, or ſtop its mouth with a *noli proſequi*. They can make no addition by their authority, to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of divine ſovereignty only.

Puniſhing the tranſgreſſions of his law; this is a neceſſary branch of dominion.—His ſovereignty in making laws would be a trifle, if there were not alſo an authority to vindicate thoſe laws from contempt and injury; he would be a Lord only ſpurned at by rebels. Sovereignty is not preſerved without juſtice. When the pſalmiſt ſpeaks of the majeſty of God's kingdom, he tells us, that *righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, Pſa. xcvii. 1, 2. Theſe are the engines of divine dignity, which render him glorious and majeſtic. A legiſlative power would be trampled on without executive; by this the reverential apprehenſions of God are preſerved in the world. He is known to be Lord of the world, *by the judgments which he executes*,

Pſa. ix. 16. When he ſeems to have loſt his dominion, or given it up in the world, he recovers it by puniſhment. When he takes ſome away with a whirlwind, and in his wrath, the natural conſequence men make of it, is this, *Surely there is a God that judgeth the earth*, Pſa. lviii. 9, 11. He reduceth the creature by the laſh of his judgments, that would not acknowledge his authority in his precepts. Thoſe ſins which diſown his government in the heart and conſcience, as pride, inward blaſphemy, &c. he hath reſerved a time hereafter to reckon for. He doth not preſently ſhoot his arrows into the marrow of every delinquent, but thoſe ſins which traduce his government of the world, and tear up the foundations of human converſe, and a publick reſpect to him, he reckons with particularly here, as well as hereafter, that the life of his ſovereignty might not always faint in the world.

This of puniſhing was the ſecond diſcovery of his dominion in the world.—His firſt act of ſovereignty was the giving a law, the next, his appearance in the ſtate of a judge. When his orders were violated, he reſcues the honour of them by an execution of juſtice. He firſt judged the angels, puniſhing the evil ones for their crime; the firſt court he kept among them as a Governor, was to give them a law; the ſecond court he kept, was a Judge trying the delinquents, and adjudging the offenders, to be *reſerved in chains of darkneſs* till the final execution, Jude 6; and at the ſame time probably he confirmed the good ones in their obedience by grace. So the firſt diſcovery of his dominion to man, was the giving him a precept; the next was the inflicting a puniſhment for the breach of it. He ſummons Adam to the bar, indicts him for his crime, finds him guilty by his own confeſſion, and paſſeth ſentence on him, according to the rule he had before acquainted him with.

The

The means whereby he puniſheth ſhews his dominion.—Sometimes he muſters up hail and mildew; ſometimes he ſends regiments of wild beaſts; ſo he threatens Iſrael, Levit. xxvi. 22; ſometimes he ſends out a party of angels, to beat up the quarters of men, and make a carnage among them, 2 Kings xix. 35. Sometimes he mounts his thundering battery, and ſhoots forth his ammunition from the clouds; as againſt the Philiſtines, 1 Sam. vii. 10. Sometimes he ſends the ſlighteſt creatures to ſhame the pride, and puniſh the ſin of man; as lice, frogs, locuſts; as upon the Egyptians, Exod. viii. ix. x.

This dominion is manifeſted by God as a proprietor and lord of his creatures and his own goods.

And this is evident in the choice of ſome perſons from eternity.—He hath ſet apart ſome from eternity, wherein he will diſplay the invincible efficacy of his grace, and thereby infallibly bring them to the fruition of glory. Eph. i. 4, 5, *According as he hath choſen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love, having predeſtinated us to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will.* Why doth he write ſome names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol ſome, whom he intends to make denizons of heaven, and refuſe to put others in his regiſter? the apoſtle tells us, it is the pleaſure of his will. You may render a reaſon for many of God's actions, till you come to this, the top and foundation of all; and under what head of reaſon can man reduce this act but to that of his royal prerogative? why doth God ſave ſome, and condemn others at laſt? becauſe of the faith of the one, and unbelief of the other. Why do ſome men believe? becauſe God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied thoſe means with the efficacy of his Spirit. Why did God accompany thoſe means

means with the efficacy of his Spirit in ſome, and not in others? becauſe he had decreed by grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree, or chooſe ſome, and not others? Into what will you reſolve this but into his ſovereign pleaſure? Salvation and condemnation at the laſt upſhot, are acts of God as the judge conformable to his own law of giving life to believers, and inflicting death upon unbelievers; for thoſe a reaſon may be rendered; but the choice of ſome and preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a ſovereign monarch, before any law was actually tranſgreſſed, becauſe not actually given. When a prince redeems a rebel, he acts as a judge according to law; but when he calls ſome out, to pardon, he acts as a ſovereign by a prerogative above law; into this the apoſtle reſolves it, Rom. ix. 13, 15, when he ſpeaks of God's loving Jacob and hating Eſau, and that before they had done either good or evil: it is *becauſe God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion.*

God's Patience.

Nahum i. 3.

THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER, AND GREAT IN POWER, AND WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED: THE LORD HATH HIS WAY IN THE WHIRLWIND, AND IN THE STORM, AND THE CLOUDS ARE THE DUST OF HIS FEET.

SLOWNESS to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the divine nature.—As patience ſignifies ſuffering, ſo it is not in God. The divine nature is impaſſible, incapable of any impair, it cannot be touched by the violences of men, nor the eſſential glory of it be diminiſhed by the injuries of men; but as it ſignifies a willingneſs to defer, and an unwillingneſs to pour forth his wrath upon ſinful creatures: he moderates his provoked juſtice, and forbears to revenge the injuries he daily meets in the world. He ſuffers no grief by mens wronging him, but he reſtrains his arm from puniſhing them according to their merits; and thus there is patience in every croſs a man meets with in the world: becauſe though it be a puniſhment, it is leſs than is merited by the unrighteous rebel, and leſs than may be inflicted by a righteous and powerful God.

This patience is ſeen in his providential works in the world; *He ſuffered the nations to walk in their own way*, and the witneſs of his providence to them was his *giving them rain, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their*

their heart with food and gladneſs, Acts xvi. 17. The heathens took notice of it, and ſignified it, by feigning their god Saturn to be bound a whole year in a ſoft cord, a cord of wool, and expreſſed it by this proverb, "The mills of the gods grind ſlowly;" *i. e.* God doth not uſe men with that ſeverity that they deſerve: the mills being uſually turned by criminals, condemned to that work. This in ſcripture is frequently expreſſed by a ſlowneſs to anger, Pſa. ciii. 8. ſometimes by long-ſuffering, which is a patience with duration, Pſa. cxlv. 8. and Joel ii. 13. He is ſlow to anger, he takes not the firſt occaſions of a provocation; he is long-ſuffering, Rom. ix. 22, and Pſa. lxxxvi. 15. he forbears puniſhment upon many occaſions offered him. It is long before he conſents to give fire to his wrath, and ſhoot out his thunderbolts; ſin hath a loud cry, but God ſeems to ſtop his ears, not to hear the clamor it raiſes, and the charge it preſents. He keeps his ſword a long time in the ſheath; one calls the patience of God, the ſheath of his ſword, upon thoſe words, Ezek. xxi. 3, *I will draw forth my ſword out of his ſheath.* This is one remarkable letter in the name of God, he himſelf proclaims it; Exod. xxxiv. 6, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious and long ſuffering.* And Moſes pleads it in the behalf of the people, Num. xiv. 18, where he placeth it in the firſt rank; the Lord is *long ſuffering, and of great mercy:* it is the firſt ſpark of mercy, and uſhers it to its exerciſes in the world. In the Lord's proclamation, it is put in the middle link, *mercy and truth* together; mercy could have no room to act, if patience did not prepare the way; and his truth and goodneſs in his promiſe of the Redeemer would not have been manifeſt to the world, if he had ſhot his arrows as ſoon as men committed their ſins, and deſerved his puniſhment. This perfection is expreſt by other phraſes, as keeping ſilence; Pſa. l. 21, *Theſe things haſt thou done,*

done, and I kept ſilence; it ſignifies to behave ones ſelf as a deaf or dumb man. I did not fly in thy face, as ſome do with great noiſe, upon a light provocation, as if their life, honour, and eſtates were at the ſtake. I did not preſently call thee to the bar, and pronounce judicial ſentence upon thee according to the law, but demeaned myſelf, as if I had been ignorant of thy crimes, and had not been inveſted with the power of judging thee for them, Chald. *I waited for thy converſion.* God's patience is the ſilence of his juſtice, and the firſt whiſper of his mercy.

It is alſo expreſt by *not laying folly* to men, Job xxiv. 12. Men groan under the oppreſſions of others, yet God lays not folly to them, *i. e.* to the oppreſſors, God ſuffers them to go on with impunity. He doth not deliver his people, becauſe he would try them, and takes not revenge upon the unrighteous, becauſe in patience he doth bear with them. Patience is the life of his providence in this world. He chargeth not men with their crimes here, but reſerves them upon impenitency for another trial. This attribute is ſo great a one, that it is ſignally called by the name of perfection, Matt. v. 45, 48. He had been ſpeaking of divine goodneſs, and patience to evil men, and he concludes, *be you perfect, &c.* implying it to be an amazing perfection in the divine nature, and worthy of imitation.

In the proſecution of this, let us conſider,

1. The nature of this patience.
2. Wherein it is manifeſted.
3. Why God doth exerciſe ſo much patience.
4. The uſe.

Firſt, The nature of this patience. It is part of the divine goodneſs and mercy, yet differs from both.—God being the greateſt goodneſs, hath the greateſt mildneſs; mildneſs is always the companion of true goodneſs, and the greater the goodneſs,

neſs, the greater the mildneſs. Who ſo holy as Chriſt, and who ſo meek? God's ſlowneſs to anger is a branch, or ſlip from his mercy, Pſa. cxlv. 8, *The Lord is full of compaſſion, ſlow to anger.* It differs from mercy in the formal conſideration of the object; mercy reſpects the creature as miſerable, patience reſpects the creature as criminal: mercy pities him in his miſery, and patience bears with the ſin, which engendered that miſery, and is giving birth to more.

Again, mercy is one end of patience, his long ſuffering is partly to glorify his grace, ſo it was in Paul, 1 Tim. i. 16. As ſlowneſs to anger ſprings from goodneſs, ſo it makes mercy the but, and mark of its operations; Iſa. xxx. 18, *He waits that he may be gracious*; goodneſs ſets God upon the exerciſe of patience, and patience ſets many a ſinner on running into the arms of mercy. That mercy which makes God ready to embrace returning ſinners, makes him willing to bear with them in their ſins, and wait their return.

It differs alſo from goodneſs, in regard of the object. The object of goodneſs is every creature, angels, men, all inferior creatures, to the loweſt worm that crawls upon the ground. The object of patience is primarily man, and ſecondarily, thoſe creatures that reſpect mens ſupport, conveniency and delight; but they are not the objects of patience, as conſidered in themſelves, but in relation to man, for whoſe uſe they were created, and therefore God's patience to them is properly his patience with man. The lower creatures do not injure God, and therefore are not the objects of his patience, but as they are forfeited by man, and man deſerves to be deprived of them; as man in this regard falls under the patience of God, ſo do thoſe creatures which are deſigned for man's good. That patience which ſpares man, ſpares other creatures for him, which were all forfeited by man's ſin, as well as his

his own life, and are rather the teſtimonies of God's patience, than the proper objects of it. The object of God's goodneſs then is the whole creation; not a devil in hell, but as a creature, is a mark of his goodneſs, but not of his patience. There is a kind of ſparing exerciſed to the devils, in deferring their compleat puniſhment, and hitherto keeping off the day, wherein their final ſentence is to be pronounced, yet the ſcripture never mentions this by the name of ſlowneſs of anger, or long-ſuffering. It can no more be called patience, than a prince's keeping a malefactor in chains, and not pronouncing a condeming ſentence, or not executing a ſentence already pronounced, can be called a patience with him, when it is not out of kindneſs to the offender, but for ſome reaſons of ſtate. God's ſparing the devils from their total puniſhment (which they have not yet, but are *reſerved in chains under darkneſs for it.* Jude 6.) is not in order to repentance, or attended with any invitations from God, or hopes in them; and therefore cannot come under the ſame title as God's ſparing man: where there is no propoſal of mercy, there is no exerciſe of patience. The fallen angels had no mercy reſerved for them, nor any ſacrifice prepared for them; God *ſpared not the angels,* 2 Pet. ii. 4, *but delivered them into chains of darkneſs, to be reſerved unto judgment,* i. e. he had no patience for them: for patience is properly a temporary ſparing a perſon, with a waiting for his relenting, and a change of his injurious demeanour; the object of goodneſs is more extenſive than that of patience: nor do they both conſider the object under the ſame relation. Goodneſs reſpects things in a capacity, or in a ſtate of creation, and brings them forth into creation, and nurſeth, and ſupports them as creatures. Patience conſiders them already created, and fallen ſhort of the duty of creatures; it conſiders them as ſinners, or in relation to ſinners. Had not ſin entered, patience had never been

been exerciſed; but goodneſs had been exerciſed, had the creature ſtood firm in its created ſtate, without any tranſgreſſion; nay, creation could not have been without goodneſs; becauſe it was goodneſs to create; but patience had never been known without an object, which could not have been without an injury. Where there is no wrong, no ſuffering, nor like to be any, patience hath no proſpect of any operation. So then goodneſs reſpects perſons as creatures, patience as tranſgreſſors; mercy eyes men as miſerable and obnoxious to puniſhment, patience conſiders men as ſinful, and provoking to puniſhment.

Since it is a part of goodneſs and mercy, it is not an inſenſible patience.—What is the fruit of pure goodneſs, cannot be from a weakneſs of reſentment; he is ſlow to anger; the prophet doth not ſay, he is incapable of anger, or cannot diſcern what is a real object of anger; it implies, that he doth conſider every provocation, but he is not haſty to diſcharge his arrows upon the offenders; he ſees all, while he bears with them: his omniſcience excludes any ignorance; he cannot but ſee every wrong; every aggravation in that wrong, every ſtep and motion from the beginning to the compleating it: for he knows all our thoughts; he ſees the ſin, and the ſinner at the ſame time; the ſin with an eye of abhorrency, and the ſinner with an eye of pity. His eye is upon their iniquities, and his hatred edged againſt them; while he ſtands with arms open, waiting a penitent return. When he publiſheth his patience in his keeping ſilence, he publiſheth alſo his reſolution, to ſet in order before their eyes. Pſa. l. 21. *I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes.* Think me not ſuch a piece of phlegm and ſo dull as not to reſent your inſolencies; you ſhall ſee in my final charge, when I come to judge, that not a wry look eſcaped my knowledge, that I had an eye to behold, and a heart to

to loath every one of your tranſgreſſions. The church was ready to think, that God's ſlowneſs to deliver her, and his bearing with her oppreſſors, was not from any patience in his nature, but a drowſy careleſsneſs, a ſenſeleſs lethargy, Pſa. xliv. 23, *Awake, why ſleepeſt thou, O Lord?* we muſt conclude him an inapprehenſive God, before we can conclude him an inſenſible God. As his delaying his promiſe, is not ſlackneſs to his people, 2 Pet. iii. 9, ſo his deferring of puniſhment, is not from a ſtupidity, under the affronts offered him.

Secondly, How this patience or ſlowneſs to anger is manifeſted.

1. To our firſt parents.—His ſlowneſs to anger was evidenced, in not directing his artillery againſt them, when they firſt attempted to rebel. He might have ſtruck them dead, when they began to bite at the temptation, and were inclinable to a ſurrender; for it was a degree of ſinning, and a breach of loyalty, as well, though not ſo much as the conſummating act. God might have given way to the floods of his wrath at the firſt ſpring of man's aſpiring thoughts, when the monſtrous motion of being as God began to be curdled in his heart; but he took no notice of any of their embryo ſins, till they came to a ripeneſs, and ſtarted out of the womb of their minds, into the open air; and after he had brought his ſin to perfection, God did not preſently ſend that death upon him, which he had merited, but continued his life to the ſpace of 930 years, Gen. v. 5. The ſun and ſtars were not arreſted, from doing their office for him. Creatures were continued for his uſe; the earth did not ſwallow him up, nor a thunderbolt from heaven raſe out the memory of him. Though he had deſerved to be treated with ſuch a ſeverity for his ungrateful demeanour to his creator and benefactor, and effecting an equality with him, yet God continued him with a ſufficiency for his content, after he turned

rebel, though not with ſuch a liberality as when he remained a loyal ſubject; and though he foreſaw, that he would not make an end of ſinning, but with an end of living, he uſed him not in the ſame manner, as he uſed the devils. He added days and years to him, after he had deſerved death, and hath for this 5000 years continued the propagation of mankind, and derived from his loins an innumerable poſterity, and hath crowned multitudes of them with hoary heads; he might have extinguiſhed human race at the firſt, but ſince he hath preſerved it till this day, it muſt be interpreted nothing elſe, but the effect of an admirable patience.

His ſlowneſs to anger is manifeſt to the Gentiles.—What they were, we need no other witneſs than the apoſtle Paul, who ſums up many of their crimes, Rom. i. 29, 30, 31, 32. He doth preface the catalogue with a comprehenſive expreſſion, *being filled with all unrighteouſneſs*; and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation; they *not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them.* They were ſo ſoaked and naturalized in wickedneſs, that they had no delight and found no ſweetneſs in any thing elſe, but what was in itſelf abominable; all of them were plunged into idolatry and ſuperſtition: none of them but either ſet up their great men, or creatures beneficial to the world, and ſome the damned ſpirits in his ſtead, and paid an adoration to inſenſible creatures or devils, which was due to God. Some were ſo depraved in their lives and actions, that it ſeemed to be the intereſt of the reſt of the world, that they ſhould have been extinguiſhed for the inſtruction of their contemporaries and poſterity. The beſt of them had turned all religion into a fable, coined a world of rites, ſome unnatural in themſelves, and moſt of them unbecoming a rational creature to offer, and a Deity to accept; yet he did not preſently arm himſelf againſt them with fire and ſword, nor ſtopt the courſe of their generations,

nor

nor tare out all thoſe relicks of natural light, which were left in their minds. He did not do what he might have done, but he winked at the *times of that ignorance*, Acts xvii. 30, their ignorant idolatry: for that it refers to, ver. 29, *They thought the godhead was like to gold or ſilver, or ſtone engraved by art, and man's device*; overlooking them; he demeaned himſelf ſo, as if he did not take notice of them. He winked as if he did not ſee them, and would not deal ſo ſeverely with them: the eye of his juſtice ſeemed to wink, in not calling them to an account for their ſins.

His ſlowneſs to anger is manifeſt to the Iſraelites. —You know how often they are called a ſtiff-necked people; they are ſaid to do evil from their youth, *i. e.* from the time wherein they were erected a nation and commonwealth; and that the *city had been a provocation of his anger, and of his fury, from the day that they built it, even to this day, i. e.* the day of Jeremiah's prophecy, *that he ſhould remove it from before his face*, Jer. xxxii. 31. From the days of Solomon, ſay ſome, which is too much a curtailing of the text, as though their provocations had taken date no higher than from the time of Solomon's rearing the temple, and beautifying the city, whereby it ſeemed to be a new building. They began more early, they ſcarce diſcontinued their revolting from God; they were a *grief to him forty years in the wilderneſs*, Pſa. xcv. 10, *Yet he ſuffered their manners*, Acts xiii. 18, he bore with their ill behaviour and ſaucineſs towards him; and no ſooner was Joſhua's head laid, and the elders that were their conductors, gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forſook God, and ſmutted themſelves with the idolatry of the nations, Judg. ii. 7, 10, 11. And when he puniſhed them by proſpering the arms of their enemies againſt them, they were no ſooner delivered upon their cry and humiliation, but they began a new ſcene of idolatry.

And though he brought upon them the power of the Babylonian empire, and laid chains upon them, to bring them to their right mind. And at ſeventy years end he ſtruck off their chains, by altering the whole poſture of affairs in that part of the world for their ſakes; overturning one empire, and ſettling another for their reſtoration to their antient city. And though they did not after diſown him for their God, and ſet up Baal in his throne, yet they multiplied fooliſh traditions, whereby they impaired the authority of the law; yet he ſuſtained them with a wonderful patience, and preferred them before all other people in the firſt offers of the goſpel; and after they had outraged not only his ſervants, the prophets, but his Son, the Redeemer, yet he did not forſake them, but employed his apoſtles to ſolicit them, and publiſh among them the doctrine of ſalvation. So that his treating this people, might well be called much long ſuffering, it being above 1500 years, wherein he bore with them, or mildly puniſhed them, far leſs than their deſerts. Their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final deſtruction as a commonwealth, not till about forty years after the death of Chriſt; and all this time his patience did ſometimes wholly reſtrain his juſtice, and ſometimes let it fall upon them in ſome few drops, but made no total devaſtation of their country, nor wrote his revenge in extraordinary bloody characters, till the Roman conqueſt, wherein he put a period to them both as a church and ſtate.

In particular this patience is manifeſt in his giving warnings of judgments, before he orders them to go forth.—He doth not puniſh in a paſſion, and haſtily; he ſpeaks before he ſtrikes, and ſpeaks that he may not ſtrike. Wrath is publiſhed, before it is executed, and that a long time; 120 years advertiſement was given to a debauched world, before the heavens were opened, to ſpout down a deluge

deluge upon them. He will not be accuſed of coming unawares upon a people; he inflicts nothing, but what he foretold either immediately to the people that provoke him, or anciently to them that have been their forerunners in the ſame provocation. Hoſ. vii. 12, *I will chaſtiſe them, as their congregation hath heard.* Many of the leaves of the old teſtament are full of thoſe preſages and warnings of approaching judgment; theſe make up a great part of the volume in various editions, according to the ſtate of the ſeveral provoking times. Warnings are given to thoſe people that are moſt abominable in his ſight; Zeph. ii. 1, 2, *Gather yourſelves together, yea gather together, O nation, not deſired*; it is a *meioſis.* O nation abhorred, before the decree bring forth. He ſends his heralds, before he ſends his armies; he ſummons them by the voice of his prophets, before he confounds them by the voice of his thunders. When a parley is beaten, a white flag of peace is hung out, before a black flag of fury is ſet up. He ſeldom cuts down men by his judgments, before he hath *hewed them by his prophets,* Hoſ. vi. 5: not a remarkable judgment, but was foretold; the flood to the old world by Noah; the famine to Egypt by Joſeph; the earthquake by Amos, Amos i. 1; the ſtorm from Chaldea by Jeremy; the captivity of the ten tribes by Hoſea; the total deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the temple, by Chriſt himſelf; he hath choſen the beſt perſons in the world to give thoſe intimations; Noah, the moſt righteous perſon on the earth for the old world; and his Son, the moſt beloved perſon in heaven for the Jews in the latter time. And in other parts of the world, and in the latter times, where he hath not warned by prophets, he hath ſupplied it by prodigies in the air and earth; hiſtories are full of ſuch items from heaven. Leſſer judgments are forewarners of greater, as lightening before thunder, are meſſengers to tell us of a ſucceeding clap.

He doth often give warning of judgments.—He comes not to extremity, till he hath often ſhaken the rod over men; he thunders often, before he cruſheth them with his thunderbolt; he doth not till after the firſt and ſecond admonition puniſh a rebel, as he would have us reject a heretic. *He ſpeaks once, yea twice,* Job xxxiii. 14, *and man perceives it not*; he ſends one meſſage after another, and waits the ſucceſs of many meſſages, before he ſtrikes. Eight prophets were ordered to acquaint the old world with approaching judgment: 2 Pet. ii. 5. He ſaved Noah the eighth perſon, *a preacher of righteouſneſs, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly*; called the eighth in reſpect of his preaching, not in regard of his preſervation; he was the eighth preacher, in order from the beginning of the world, that endeavoured to reſtore the world to the way of righteouſneſs. Moſt indeed conſider him here, as the eighth perſon ſaved: ſo do our tranſlators, and therefore add perſon, which is not in the Greek. Some others conſider him here, as the eighth preacher of righteouſneſs, reckoning Enos the ſon of Seth the firſt; grounding it upon Gen. iv. 26, *Then began men to call on the name of the Lord.* Heb *Then it was began to call in the name of the Lord.* Sept. *He began to call in the name of the Lord*; which others render, he began to preach, or call upon men in the name of the Lord. The word ſignifies to preach, or to call upon men by preaching, Prov. i. 21, *wiſdom crieth,* or preaches; and if this be ſo, as it is very probable, it is eaſy to reckon him the eighth preacher, by numbering the ſucceſſive heads of the generations, Gen. 5; beginning at Enos the firſt preacher of righteouſneſs. So many there were before God choaked the old world with water, and ſwept them away; it is clear he often did admoniſh by his prophets, the Jews of their ſin, and the wrath which ſhould come upon them. One prophet, Hoſea, propheſied ſeventy years; for he propheſied in the days of four kings of Judah, and one

one of Iſrael, Jeroboam the ſon of Joaſh, Hoſ. i. 1; or Jeroboam the ſecond of that name. Uzziah, king of Judah, in whoſe reign Hoſea propheſied, lived thirty-eight years after the death of Jeroboam. The ſecond Jotham, Uzziah's ſucceſſor, reigned ſixteen years, Ahaz ſixteen, Hezekiah twenty-nine years; now take nothing of Hezekiah's time, and date the beginning of his prophecy from the laſt year of Jeroboam's reign, and the time of Hoſea's prophecy, which will be ſeventy years compleat; wherein God warned thoſe people, and waited the return particularly of Iſrael; and not leſs than five of thoſe, we call the leſſer prophets, were ſent to foretel the deſtruction of the ten tribes, and to call them to repentance: Hoſea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah; and though we have nothing of Jonah's prophecy in this concern of Iſrael, yet that he lived in the time of the ſame Jeroboam, and propheſied things, which are not upon record in the book of Jonah, is clear; 2 Kings xiv. 25. And beſides thoſe, Iſaiah propheſied alſo in the reign of the ſame kings as Hoſea did; Iſa. i. 1. And it is God's uſual method, to ſend forth his ſervants, and when their admonitions are ſlighted, he commiſſions others, before he ſends out his deſtroying armies, Mat. xxii. 3, 4, 7.

His patience is manifeſt in his unwillingneſs to execute his judgments when he can delay no longer. —*He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* Lament. iii. 33. Hebr. *He doth not afflict from his heart.* He takes no pleaſure in it, as he is Creator. The height of men's provocations, and the neceſſity of the preſerving his rights, and vindicating his laws, obligeth him to it, as he is the governor of the world. As a judge may willingly condemn a malefactor to death out of affection to the laws, and deſire to preſerve the order of government, but unwillingly out of compaſſion to the offender himſelf. When he reſolved upon the

deſtruction of the old world, he ſpake it, as a God grieved with an occaſion of puniſhment, Gen. vi. 6, 7, compared together. When he came to reckon with Adam, he walked, he did not run with his ſword in his hand upon him, as a mighty man with an eagerneſs to deſtroy him, Gen. iii. 8. and that in the cool of the day, a time when men tired in the day, are unwilling to engage in a hard employment. His exerciſing judgment, is a *coming out of his place*, Iſa. xxvi. 21. Micah i. 3. He comes out of his ſtation, to exerciſe judgment; a throne is more his place than a tribunal. Every prophecy loaded with threatenings, is called *the burden of the Lord*; a burden to him to execute it, as well as to men to ſuffer it. Though three angels came to Abraham about the puniſhment of Sodom, whereof one Abraham ſpeaks to as to God, yet but two appeared at the deſtruction of Sodom; as if the Governor of the world were unwilling to be preſent at ſuch dreadful work, Gen. xix. 1. And when the man that had the inkhorn by his ſide, that was appointed to mark thoſe that were to be preſerved in the common deſtruction, returned to give an account of the performing his commiſſion, Ezek. ix. 10, we read not of the return of thoſe that were to kill, as if God delighted only to hear again of his works of mercy, and had no mind to hear again of his ſevere proceedings. The Jews, to ſhew God's unwillingneſs to puniſh, imagine that hell was created the ſecond day; becauſe that day's work is not pronounced good by God, as all the other days works are, Gen. i. 8.

When God doth puniſh, he doth it with ſome regret.—When he hurls down his thunders, he ſeems to do it with a backward hand; becauſe with an unwilling heart. He created, ſaith Chryſoſtom, the world in ſix days, but was ſeven days in deſtroying one city, Jericho, which he had before devoted to be raſed to the ground. What is the reaſon

reaſon, ſaith he, that God is ſo quick to build up, but ſlow to pull down? His goodneſs excites his power to the one, but is not earneſt to perſuade him to the other. When he comes to ſtrike, he doth it with a ſigh or groan, Iſa. i. 24, *Ah, I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.* Ah! a note of grief. So Hoſ. vi. 4, *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee?* It is an *addubitatio*, a figure in rhetoric, as if God were troubled, that he muſt deal ſo ſharply with them, and give them up to their enemies. I have tried all means to reclaim you, I have uſed all ways of kindneſs, and nothing prevails. What ſhall I do? my mercy invites me to ſpare them, and their ingratitude provokes me to ruin them. God had borne with that people of Iſrael almoſt three hundred years, from the ſetting up of the calves at Dan and Bethel; ſent many a prophet to warn them, and ſpent many a rod to reform them. And when he comes to execute his threatenings, he doth it with a conflict in himſelf. Hoſea xi. 8, *How ſhall I give thee up, O Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael?* As if there were a pull-back in his own bowels, he ſolemnizeth their approaching funeral with a hearty groan; and takes his farewel of the dying malefactor with a pang in himſelf. How often in former times when he had ſigned a warrant for their execution, did he call it back? Pſa. lxxvii. 38, *Many a time turned he his anger away:* many a time he recalled, or ordered his anger to return again, as the word ſignifies, as if he were irreſolute what to do. He recalled it, as a man doth his ſervant ſeveral times, when he is ſending him upon an unwelcome meſſage; or as a tender hearted prince wavers and trembles, when he is to ſign a writ for the death of a rebel, that hath been before his favorite, as if when he had ſigned the writ, he blotted out his name again, and flung away the pen. And his

method

method is remarkable, when he came to puniſh Sodom; though the cry of their ſin had been fierce in his ears, yet when he comes to make inquiſition, he declares his intention to Abraham, as if he were deſirous, that Abraham ſhould have helped him to ſome arguments, to ſtop the outgoings of his judgment. He gave liberty to the beſt perſon in the world, to ſtand in the gap, and enter into a treaty with him, to ſhew (ſaith one) how willingly his mercy would have compounded with his juſtice for their redemption. And Abraham intercedeth ſo long, till he was aſhamed for pleading the cauſe of patience and mercy, to the wrong of the rights of divine juſtice. Perhaps, had Abraham had the courage to aſk, God would have had the compaſſion to grant a reprieve juſt at the time of execution.

His patience is ſeen in giving great mercies after provocations.—He is ſo ſlow to anger, that he heaps many kindneſſes upon a rebel, inſtead of puniſhment. There is a proſperous wickedneſs, wherein the provokers ſtrength continues firm; the troubles, which like clouds drop upon others, are blown away from them, and they are not plagued like other men, that have a more worthy demeanour towards God, Pſa. lxxiii. 3, 4, 5. He doth not only continue their lives, but ſends out freſh beams of his goodneſs upon them, and calls them by his bleſſings, that they may acknowledge their own fault, and his bounty, which he is not obliged to by any gratitude, he meets with from them, but by the riches of his own patient nature: for he finds the unthankfulneſs of men, as great as his benefits to them. He doth not only continue his outward mercies, while we continue our ſins, but ſometimes gives freſh benefits after new provocations: that if poſſible he might excite an ingenuity in men. When Iſrael at the Red Sea flung dirt in the face of God, by quarrelling with his ſervant Moſes for bringing them out of Egypt, and miſ-judging God in his deſign

deſign of deliverance, and were ready to ſubmit themſelves to their former oppreſſors, Exod. xiv. 11, 12, which might juſtly have urged God to ſay to them, take your own courſe; yet he is not only patient under their unjuſt charge, but makes bare his arm in a deliverance at the Red Sea, that was to be an amazing monument to the world in all ages; and afterwards when they repiningly quarrelled with him in their wants in the wilderneſs, he did not only not revenge himſelf upon them, or caſt off the conduct of them, but bore with them by a miraculous long ſuffering, and ſupplied them with miraculous proviſion, manna from heaven, and water from a rock. Food is given to ſupport us, and clothes to cover us, and divine patience makes the creatures, which we turn to another uſe, than what they were at firſt intended for, ſerve us contrary to their own genius: for had they reaſon, no queſtion but they would complain, to be ſubjected to the ſervice of man, who hath been ſo ungrateful to their Creator, and groan at the abuſe of God's patience, in the abuſe they themſelves ſuffer from the hands of man.

All this is more manifeſt, if we conſider the provocations he hath.—Wherein his ſlowneſs to anger infinitely tranſcends the patience of any creature; nay the ſpirits of all the angels and glorified ſaints in heaven, would be too narrow to bear the ſins of the world for one day; nay not ſo much as the ſins of churches, which is a little ſpot in the whole world: it is becauſe he is the Lord, one of an infinite power over himſelf, that not only the whole maſs of the rebellious world, but of the ſons of Jacob, (either conſidered as a church and nation, ſpringing from the loins of Jacob, or conſidered as the regenerate part of the world, ſometimes called the ſeed of Jacob,) are not conſumed, Mal. iii. 6. A Jonah was angry with God, for recalling his anger from a ſinful people: had God committed the

the government of the world to the glorified ſaints, who are perfect in love and holineſs, the world would have had an end long ago; they would have acted that, which they ſue for at the hands of God, and is not granted them, Rev. vi. 10, *How long, Lord, holy and true, doſt thou not avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth?* God hath deſigns of patience above the world, above the unſinning angels, and perfectly renewed ſpirits in glory. The greateſt created long-ſuffering is infinitely diſproportioned to the divine; fire from heaven would have been ſhowered down before the greateſt part of a day were ſpent, if a created patience had the conduct of the world, though that creature were poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of patience, extracted from all the creatures which are in heaven, or are, or ever were upon earth. Methinks Moſes intimates this; for as ſoon as God had paſſed by proclaiming his name gracious and long-ſuffering; as ſoon as ever Moſes had paid his adoration, he falls a praying that God would go with the Iſraelites, Exod. xxxiv. 8, 9, *For it is a ſtiff-necked people*; what an argument is here for God to go along with them? He might rather, ſince he had heard him juſt before ſay, he would *by no means clear the guilty*, deſire God to ſtand further off from them, for fear the fire of his wrath ſhould burſt out from him, to burn them as he did the Sodomites: but he conſiders, that as none but God had ſuch anger to deſtroy them, ſo none but God had ſuch a patience to bear with them; it is as much as if he ſhould have ſaid, Lord! if thou ſhouldeſt ſend the moſt tender-hearted angel in heaven to have the guidance of this people, they would be a loſt people; a period will quickly be ſet to their lives; no created ſtrength can reſtrain its power from cruſhing ſuch a ſtiff-necked people; fleſh and blood cannot bear them, nor any created ſpirit of a greater might.

Conſider

Conſider the greatneſs of the provocations.—No light matter, but actions of a great defiance: what is the practical language of moſt in the world, but that of Pharaoh? *Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him?* How many queſtion his being, and more, his authority? What blaſphemies of him, what reproaches of his majeſty? Men *drinking up iniquity like water, and* with a haſte and ardency *ruſhing into ſin as the horſe into the battle.* What is there in the reaſonable creature, that hath the quickeſt capacity, and the deepeſt obligation to ſerve him, but oppoſition and enmity, a ſlight of him in every thing, yea the ſervices moſt ſeriouſly performed, unſuited to the royalty and purity of ſo great a being? Such provocations as dare him to his face, that are a burden to ſo righteous a judge, and ſo great a lover of the authority and majeſty of his laws; that were there but a ſpark of anger in him, it is a wonder it doth not ſhew itſelf; when he is invaded in all his attributes, it is aſtoniſhing that this ſingle one of patience and meekneſs, ſhould withſtand the aſſault of all the reſt of his perfections; his being, which is attacked by ſin, ſpeaks for vengeance; his juſtice cannot be imagined to ſtand ſilent, without charging the ſinner. His holineſs cannot but encourage his juſtice to urge its pleas, and be an advocate for it. His omniſcience proves the truth of all the charge, and his abuſed mercy hath little encouragement, to make oppoſition to the indictment; nothing but patience ſtands in the gap, to keep off the arreſt of judgment from the ſinner.

His patience is manifeſt, if you conſider the multitudes of theſe provocations.—Every man hath ſin enough in a day to make him ſtand amazed at divine patience, and to call it, as well as the apoſtle did, all long-ſuffering, 1 Tim. i. 16. How few duties of a perfectly right ſtamp are performed? What unworthy conſiderations mix themſelves like droſs,

droſs, with our pureſt and ſincereſt gold? How more numerous are the reſpects of the worſhippers of him to themſelves, than unto him? How many ſervices are paid him, not out of love to him, but becauſe he ſhould do us no hurt, and ſome ſervice; when we do not ſo much deſign to pleaſe him, as to pleaſe ourſelves by expectations of a reward from him? What maſter would endure a ſervant that endeavoured to pleaſe him only becauſe he ſhould not kill him? Is that former charge of God upon the old world yet out of date, *That the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil, and that continually?* Gen. vi. 5. Was not the new world as chargeable with it as the old? Certainly it was, Gen. viii. 21. And it is of as much force this very minute as it was then; how many are the ſins againſt knowledge, as well as thoſe of ignorance; preſumptuous ſins, as well as thoſe of infirmity? How numerous thoſe of omiſſion and commiſſion? It is above the reach of any man's underſtanding to conceive all the blaſphemies, oaths, thefts, adulteries, murders, oppreſſions, contempt of religion, the open idolatries of Turks and Heathens, the more ſpiritual and refined idolatries of others. Add to thoſe the ingratitude of them that profeſs his name, their pride, earthlineſs, careleſsneſs, ſluggiſhneſs to divine duties; and in every one of thoſe a multitude of provocations; the whole man being engaged in every ſin, the underſtanding contriving it, the will embracing it, the affections complying with, and all the members of the body inſtruments in the acting the unrighteouſneſs of it; every one of theſe faculties beſtowed upon men by him, are armed againſt him in every act; and in every employment of them there is a diſtinct provocation, though centered in one ſinful end and object. What are the offences all the men of the world receive from their fellow-creatures, to the injuries God receives from men, but as a ſmall duſt of the earth to the

whole

whole maſs of earth and heaven too? What multitudes of ſins is one profane wretch guilty of in the ſpace of twenty, forty, or fifty years? Who can compute the vaſt number of his tranſgreſſions, from the firſt uſe of reaſon to the time of the ſeparation of his ſoul from his body; from his entrance into the world to his exit? What are thoſe, to thoſe of a whole village of the like inhabitants? What are thoſe, to thoſe of a great city? Who can number up all the foul-mouthed oaths, the beaſtly exceſs, the goatiſh uncleanneſs, committed in the ſpace of a day, year, twenty years, in this city, much leſs in the whole nation, leaſt of all in the whole world? Were it no more than the common idolatry of former ages, when the whole world turned their backs upon their Creator, and paſſed him by to ſue to a creature, a ſtock or ſtone, or a degraded ſpirit. How provoking would it be to a prince, to ſee a whole city under his dominion deny him a reſpect; and pay it to his ſcullion, or the common executioner he employs? Add to this the unjuſt invaſions of kings, the oppreſſions exerciſed upon men, all the private and public ſins that have been in the world, ever ſince it began. The Gentiles were deſcribed by the apoſtle, Rom i. 29, 30, 31, in a black character, they were haters of God; yet how did the riches of his patience preſerve multitudes of ſuch diſingenuous perſons, and how many millions of ſuch haters of him breathe every day in his air, and are maintained by his bounty, have their tables ſpread, and their cups filled to the brim, and that too in the midſt of reiterated belchings of their enmity againſt him? All are under ſufficient provocations of him to the higheſt indignation. The preſiding angels over nations could not forbear, in love and honour to their governor, to arm themſelves to the deſtruction of their ſeveral charges, if divine patience did not ſet them a pattern, and their obedience incline them to expect

his

his orders, before they act what their zeal would prompt them to. The devils would be glad of a commiſſion to deſtroy the world, but that his patience puts a ſtop to their fury, as well as his own juſtice.

Conſider the long time of this patience.—He ſpread out his hands all the day to a rebellious world, Iſa. lxv. 2. All men's day, all God's day, which is a thouſand years, he hath borne with the groſs of mankind, with all the nations of the world in a long ſucceſſion of ages for five thouſand years, and upwards already, and will bear with them, till the time comes for the world's diſſolution. He hath ſuffered the monſtrous acts of men, and endured the contradictions of a ſinful world againſt himſelf, from the firſt ſin of Adam to the laſt committed this minute. The line of his patience hath run along with the duration of the world to this day, and there is not any one of Adam's poſterity but hath been expenſive to him, and partook of the riches of it.

All theſe he bears when he hath a ſenſe of them.—He ſees every day the roll and catalogue of ſin increaſing, he hath a diſtinct view of every one from the ſin of Adam to the laſt, filed up in his omniſcience; and yet gives no order for the arreſt of the world. He knows men fitted for deſtruction, all the inſtants he exerciſeth long-ſuffering towards them, which makes the apoſtle call it, not ſimply long-ſuffering, without the addition of *much long-ſuffering*, Rom. ix. 23. There is not a grain in the whole maſs of ſin, that he hath not a diſtinct knowledge of, and of the quality of it. He perfectly underſtands the greatneſs of his own majeſty which is vilified, and the nature of the offence that doth diſparage him. He is ſolicited by his juſtice, directed by his omniſcience, and armed with judgments to vindicate himſelf—but his arm is reſtrained by patience. To conclude, no indignity

nity is hid from him, no iniquity is beloved by him; the hatred of their ſinfulneſs is infinite, and the knowledge of the malice is exact. The ſubſiſting of the world under ſuch weighty provocations, ſo numerous, ſo long time, and with his full ſenſe of every one of them, is an evidence of ſuch a forbearance and long-ſuffering, that the addition of riches which the apoſtle puts to it, Rom. ii. 4, labours with an inſufficiency clearly to diſplay it.

Thirdly, Why God doth exerciſe ſo much patience.

To ſhew himſelf appeaſable.—God did not declare by his patience to former ages, or any age, that he was appeaſed with them, or that they were in his favour; but that he was appeaſable, that he was not an implacable enemy, but that they might find him favourable to them, if they did ſeek after him. The continuance of the world by patience, and the beſtowing many mercies by goodneſs, were not a natural revelation of the manner how he would be appeaſed: that was made known only by the prophets, and after the coming of Chriſt by the apoſtles; and had indeed been intelligible in ſome ſort to the whole world, had there been a faithfulneſs in Adam's poſterity, to tranſmit the tradition of the firſt promiſe to ſucceeding generations. Had not the knowledge of that died by their careleſſneſs and neglect, it had been eaſy to tell the reaſon of God's patience to be in order to the exhibition of the *ſeed of the woman, to bruiſe the ſerpent's head.*

They could not but naturally know themſelves ſinners, and worthy of death; they might by eaſy reflections upon themſelves, collect that they were not in that comely and harmonious poſture now, as they were, when God firſt wrought them with his own finger, and placed them as his lieutenants in the world; they knew they did grievouſly offend him; this they were taught by the ſprinklings of

his judgments among them ſometimes. And ſince he did not utterly root up mankind, his ſparing patience was a prologue of ſome further favours, or pardoning grace to be diſplayed to the world by ſome methods of God yet unknown to them. Though the earth was ſomething impaired by the curſe, after the fall, yet the main pillars of it ſtood; the ſtate of the natural motions of the creature was not changed; the heavens remained in the ſame poſture, wherein they were created; the ſun and moon and other heavenly bodies continued their uſefulneſs and refreſhing influences to man. *The heavens did ſtill declare the glory of God, day unto day did utter ſpeech, their line is gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,* Pſa. xix. 1, 2, 3, 4, which declared God to be willing to do good to his creatures, and were as ſo many legible letters or rudiments, whereby they might read his patience, and that a further deſign of favour to the world lay hid in that patience. Paul applies this to the preaching of the goſpel, Rom. x. 18, *Have they not heard the word of God? yes, verily their ſound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.* Redeeming grace could not be ſpelled out by them in a clear notion, but yet they did declare that which is the foundation of goſpel mercy. Were not God patient there were no room for a goſpel mercy, ſo that the heavens declare the goſpel, not formally but fundamentally, in declaring the long-ſuffering of God, without which no goſpel had been framed, or could have been expected. They could not but read in thoſe things favourable inclinations towards them. And though they could not be ignorant, that they deſerved a mark of juſtice, yet ſeeing themſelves ſupported by God, and beholding the regular motions of the heavens from day to day, and the revolutions of the ſeaſons of the year, the natural concluſion they might draw from thence was,

was, that God was placable: ſince he behaved himſelf more as a tender friend, that had no mind to be at war with them, than an enraged enemy. The good things which he gave them, and the patience whereby he ſpared them, were no arguments of an implacable diſpoſition: and therefore of a diſpoſition willing to be appeaſed. This is clearly the deſign of the apoſtle's arguing with the Lyſtrians when they would have offered ſacrifices to Paul, Acts xiv. 17, *When God ſuffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he did not leave himſelf without witneſs, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons.* What were thoſe witneſſes of? Not only of the being of a God, by their readineſs to ſacrifice to thoſe that were not gods, only ſuppoſed to be ſo in their falſe imaginations; but witneſſes to the tenderneſs of God, that he had no mind to be ſevere with his creatures: but would allure them by ways of goodneſs. Had not God's patience tended to this end, to bring the world under another diſpenſation, the apoſtle's arguing from it had not been ſuitable to his deſign, which ſeems to be a hindering the ſacrifices they intended for them, and a drawing them to embrace the goſpel, and therefore preparing the way to it, by ſpeaking of the patience and goodneſs of God to them, as an unqueſtionable teſtimony of the reconcileableneſs of God to them, by ſome ſacrifice which was repreſented under the common notion of ſacrifices. Theſe things were not witneſſes of Chriſt, or ſyllables whereby they could ſpell out the redeeming perſon; but witneſſes that God was placable in his own nature. When man abuſed thoſe noble faculties God had given him, and diverted them from the uſe and ſervice God intended them for, God might have ſtript man of them, the firſt time that he miſemployed them; and it would have ſeemed moſt agreeable to his wiſdom and juſtice, not to ſuffer himſelf to be abuſed, and the world to go contrary to its natural end. But ſince he did not level the

world with its firſt nothing, but healed the world ſo favourably, it was evident, that his patience pointed the world to a further deſign of mercy and goodneſs in him. To imagine, that God had no other deſign in his long-ſuffering but that of vengeance, had been a notion unſuitable to the goodneſs and wiſdom of God. He would never have pretended himſelf, to be a friend, if he had harboured nothing but enmity in his heart againſt them.

It had been far from his goodneſs, to give them a cauſe to ſuſpect ſuch a deſign in him, as his patience certainly did, had he not intended it. Had he preſerved men only for puniſhment, it is more like, he would have treated men, as princes do thoſe they reſerve for the axe, or halter, give them only things neceſſary, to uphold their lives till the day of execution, and not have beſtowed upon them ſo many good things, to make their lives delightful to them; nor have furniſhed them with ſo many excellent means to pleaſe their ſenſes, and recreate their minds; it had been a mocking of them to treat them at that rate, if nothing but puniſhment had been intended towards them. If the end of it, to lead men to repentance, were eaſily intelligible by them, as the apoſtle intimates, (Rom. ii. 4, which is to be linked with the former chapter, a diſcourſe of the Gentiles; not knowing, ſaith he, *that the riches of his forbearance and goodneſs leads thee to repentance,*) it alſo gives them ſome ground to hope for pardon. For what other argument can more induce to repentance than an expectation of mercy, upon a relenting and acknowledging the crime. Without a deſign of pardoning grace, his patience would have been in a great meaſure exerciſed in vain: for by mere patience God is not reconciled to a ſinner, no more than a prince to a rebel by bearing with him. Nor can a ſinner conclude himſelf in the favour of God, no more than a rebel can conclude himſelf in the favour of his prince; only

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this he may conclude, that there is ſome hopes, he may have the grant of a pardon, ſince he hath time to ſue it out. And ſo much did the patience of God naturally ſignify, that he was of a reconcileable temper, and was willing men ſhould ſue out their pardon upon repentance; otherwiſe, he might have magnified his juſtice, and condemned men by the law of works.

He therefore exerciſed ſo much patience to wait for men's repentance.—All the notices and warnings that God gives men of either publick or perſonal calamities, is a continual invitation to repentance. This was the common interpretation the heathens made of extraordinary preſages and prodigies, which ſhewed as well the delays as the approaches of judgments. What other notion but this, that thoſe warnings of judgments witneſs a ſlowneſs to anger, and a willingneſs to turn his arrows another way, ſhould move them to multiply ſacrifices, go weeping to their temples, found out prayers to their gods, and ſhew all thoſe other teſtimonies of a repentance, which their blind underſtandings hit upon. If a prince ſhould ſometimes in a light and gentle manner puniſh a criminal, and then relax it, and ſhew him much kindneſs, and afterwards inflict upon him another kind of puniſhment as light as the former, and leſs than was due to his crime, what could the malefactor ſuſpect by ſuch a way of proceeding, but that the prince by thoſe gently repeated chaſtiſements, had a mind to remove him to a regret for his crime? And what other thoughts could men naturally have of God's conduct, that he ſhould warn them of great judgments, ſend light afflictions, which are teſtimonies rather of a patience, than of a ſevere wrath, but that it was intended to move them to a relenting, and a breaking off their ſins by working righteouſneſs? Though divine patience doth not in the event, induce men to repentance, yet the natural tendency of ſuch

a treatment, is to molify men's hearts, to overcome their obſtinacy, and no man hath any reaſon to judge otherwiſe of ſuch a proceeding. *The long ſuffering of God is ſalvation*, ſaith Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 15. *i. e.* hath a tendency to ſalvation, in its being a ſolicitation of men to the means of it: for the apoſtle cites Paul for the confirmation of it, *Even as our beloved brother Paul hath written unto you*, which muſt refer to Rom. ii. 4, *It leads to repentance*; it conducts, which is more than barely to invite; it doth as it were take us by the hand, and point us to the way wherein we ſhould go; and for this end it was exerciſed not only towards the Jews, but towards the Gentiles; not only towards thoſe that are within the pale of the church, and under the dews of the goſpel, but to thoſe that are in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death: for this diſcourſe of the apoſtle was but an inference from what he had treated of in the firſt chapter concerning the idolatry and ingratitude of the Gentiles; ſince the Gentiles were to be puniſhed for the abuſe of it as well as the Jews, as he intimates, ver. 9, it is plain that his patience, which is exerciſed towards the idolatrous Gentiles, was to allure them to repentance, as well as others; and it was a ſufficient motive in itſelf to perſuade them to a change of their vile and groſs acts, to ſuch as were morally good. And there was enough in God's dealing with them, and in that light they had to engage them to a better courſe, than what they uſually walked in. And though men do abuſe God's long-ſuffering, to encourage their impenitence, and perſiſting in their crimes, yet that they cannot reaſonably imagine that to be the end of God is evident, their own gripes of conſcience would acquaint them, that it is otherwiſe. They know that conſcience is a principle that God hath given them as well as underſtanding, and will, and other faculties. That God doth not approve of that, which

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the voice of their own conſciences, and of the conſciences of all men under natural light, are utterly againſt. And if there were really in this forbearance of God an approbation of men's crimes, conſcience could not frequently and univerſally in all men check them for them. What authority could conſcience have to do it? But this it doth in all men. As the apoſtle, Rom. i. 22, *They know the judgment of God, that thoſe that do ſuch things*, which he had mentioned before, *are worthy of death.* In this thing the conſciences of all men cannot err: they could not therefore conclude from hence God's approbation of their iniquities, but his deſire that their hearts ſhould be touched with a repentance for them.

The *ſin of Ephraim is hid*, Hoſea xiii. 12, 13. *i. e.* God doth not preſently take notice of it, to order puniſhment; he lays it in a ſecret place from the eye of his juſtice, that Ephraim might not be his unwiſe ſon, and *ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, i. e.* that he ſhould ſpeedily reclaim himſelf and not continue in the way of deſtruction. God hath no need to abuſe any, he doth not lie to the ſons of men; if he would have men periſh, he could eaſily deſtroy them, and have done it long ago. He did not leave the woman Jezebel in being, nor lengthened out her time, but as a ſpace to repent, Rev. ii. 21, that ſhe might reflect upon her ways, and devote herſelf ſeriouſly to his ſervice, and her own happineſs. His patience ſtands between the offending creature and eternal miſery a long time, that men might not fooliſhly throw away their ſouls, and be damned for their impenitency; by this he ſhews himſelf ready to receive men to mercy upon their return. To what purpoſe doth he invite men to repentance, if he intended to deceive them, and damn them after they repent?

He doth exerciſe patience for the propagation of mankind.—If God puniſhed every ſin preſently,

there would not only be a period put to the churches, but to the world; without patience Adam had ſunk into eternal anguiſh the firſt moment of his provocation; and the whole world of mankind in his loins, had periſhed with him, and never ſeen the light. If this perfection had not interpoſed after the firſt ſin, God had loſt his end in the creation of the world, which he *created not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited*, Iſa. xlv. 18. It had been inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of God to make a world to be inhabited, and deſtroy it upon ſin, when it had but two principal inhabitants in it; the reaſon of his making this earth had been inſignificant; he had not had any upon earth to glorify him, without erecting another world, which might have proved as ſinful, and as quickly wicked as this; God ſhould have always been pulling down, and rearing up, creating and annihilating; one world would have come after another, as wave after wave in the ſea. His patience ſtept into ſupport the honour of God, and the continuance of men, without which one had been in part impaired, and the other totally loſt.

He doth exerciſe patience for the continuance of the church.—If he be not patient towards ſinners, what ſtock would there be for believers to ſpring up from? He bears with the provoking carriage of men, evil men; becauſe out of their loins he intends to extract others, which he will form for the glory of his grace. He hath ſome unborn, that belong to the election of grace, which are to be the ſeed of the worſt of men; Jeroboam, the chief incendiary of the Iſraelites to idolatry, had an Abijah, in whom was found *ſome good thing towards the Lord God of Iſrael*, 1 Kings xiv. 13. Had Ahaz been ſnapt in the firſt act of his wickedneſs, the Iſraelites had wanted ſo good a prince, and ſo good a man as Hezekiah, a branch of that wicked predeceſſor. What gardener cuts off the thorns from a roſe-buſh, till he hath gathered the roſes? And men do not

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uſe to burn all the crab-tree, but preſerve a ſtock, to engraft ſome ſweet fruit upon. There could not have been a ſaint in the earth, nor conſequently in heaven, had it not been for this perfection. He did not deſtroy the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, that he might keep up a church among them, and not extinguiſh the whole ſeed that were heirs of the promiſes and covenant made with Abraham. Had God puniſhed men for their ſins as ſoon as they had been committed, none would have lived to have been better, none could have continued in the world, to honour him by their virtues? Manaſſeh had never been a convert, and many brutiſh men had never been changed from beaſts to angels, to praiſe and acknowledge their Creator. Had Peter received his due recompence upon the denial of his maſter, he had never been a martyr for him; nor had Paul been a preacher of the goſpel, nor any elſe: and ſo the goſpel had not ſhined in any part of the world. No ſeed would have been brought into Chriſt; Chriſt is beholding immediately to this attribute, for all the ſeed he hath in the world; it is for his name ſake that he doth defer his anger, and for his praiſe that he doth refrain from cutting us off, Iſa. xlviii. 9. And in the next chapter follows a prophecy of Chriſt. To overthrow mankind for ſin were to prevent the ſpreading a church in the world. A woman that is guilty of a capital crime, and lies under a condemning ſentence, is reprieved from execution for her being with child: it is for the child's ſake the woman is reſpited, not for her own: it is for the elect's ſake, in the loins of tranſgreſſors, they are a long time ſpared, and not for their own. Iſa. lxv. 8, 9, *As the new wine is found in the cluſter, and one ſaith, deſtroy it not for a bleſſing is in it; ſo will I do for my ſervant's ſake, that I may not deſtroy them all:* as a huſbandman ſpares a vine for ſome good cluſters in it. He had ſpoke of vengeance before, yet he would reſerve ſome, from whom

whom he would bring forth thoſe that ſhould be *inheritors of his mountains:* that he might make up his church of Judea, Jeruſalem being a mountainous place, and the type of the church in all ages. What is the reaſon he doth not level his thunder at the heads of thoſe for whoſe deſtruction he receives ſo many petitions from the *ſouls under the altar,* Rev. vi. 9, 10. Becauſe God had others to write a teſtimony for him in their own blood, and perhaps out of the loins of thoſe to whom vengeance was ſo earneſtly ſupplicated; and God, as the maſter of a veſſel, lies patiently at anchor, till the laſt paſſenger he expects, be taken in.

For the ſake of his church he is patient to wicked men.—The tares are patiently endured till the harveſt, for fear in the plucking up the one, there might be ſome prejudice done to the other. Upon this account he ſpares ſome, who are worſe than others, whom he cruſheth by ſignal judgments: the Jews had committed ſins worſe than Sodom; for the confirmation of which we have God's oath, Ezek. xvi. 48; and more by half than Samaria, or the ten tribes had done, ver. 51. Yet God ſpared the Jews, though he deſtroyed the Sodomites. What was the reaſon, but a larger remnant of righteous perſons, more cluſters of good grapes were found among them, than grew in Sodom, Iſa. i. 9. A few more righteous in Sodom had dampt the fire and brimſtone deſigned for that place; and a remnant of ſuch in Judea was a bar to that fierceneſs of anger which otherwiſe would have quickly conſumed them: had there been but *ten righteous in Sodom,* divine patience had ſtill bound the arms of juſtice, that it ſhould not have prepared its brimſtone, notwithſtanding the clamour of the ſins of the multitude. Judea was ripe for the ſickle, but God would put a lock upon the torrent of his judgments, that they ſhould not flow down upon that wicked place, to make them a deſolation and a curſe, as long as tender

tender-hearted Joſiah lived, *who had humbled himſelf* at the threatening, and wept before the Lord, 1 Kings xxii. 19, 20. Sometimes he bears with wicked men, that they might exerciſe the patience of the ſaints, Rev. xiv. 12. The whole time of the forbearance of Antichriſt in all his intruſions into the temple of God, invaſions of the rights of God, uſurpations of the office of Chriſt, and beſmearing himſelf with the blood of the ſaints, was to give them an opportunity of patience. God is patient towards the wicked, that by their means he might try the righteous. He burns not the wiſp, till he hath ſcowered his veſſels; nor lays by the hammer, till he hath formed ſome of his matter into an excellent faſhion. He uſeth the worſt of men as rods to correct his people, before he ſweeps the twigs out of his houſe. God ſometimes uſes the thorns of the world as a hedge to ſecure his church; ſometimes as inſtruments to try and exerciſe it. Howſoever he uſeth them, whether for ſecurity or trial, he is patient to them for his church's advantage.

When men are not brought to repentance by his patience, he doth longer exerciſe it, to manifeſt the equity of his future juſtice upon them.—As wiſdom is juſtified by her obedient children, ſo is juſtice juſtified by the rebels againſt patience; the contempt of the latter is the juſtification of the former. The apoſtles *were unto God a ſweet ſavour of Chriſt in them that periſh*, as well as in them that were ſaved by the acceptation of their meſſage, 2 Cor. ii. 15. Both are fragrant to God, his mercy is glorified by the one's acceptance of it, and his juſtice freed from any charge againſt it by the other's refuſal. The cauſe of men's ruin cannot be laid upon God, who provided means for their ſalvation, and ſolicited their compliance with him. What reaſon can they have to charge the Judge with any wrong to them, who reject the tenders he makes, and who hath forborne them with ſo much patience, when he might

might have cenſured them by his righteous juſtice, upon the firſt crime they committed, or the firſt refuſal of his gracious offers? *Quanto Dei magis judicium tardum eſt tanto magis juſtum.* After the deſpiſing of patience, there can be no ſuſpicion of an irregularity in the act of juſtice. Man hath no reaſon to fall foul in his charge upon God, if he were puniſhed for his own ſin, conſidering the dignity of the injured perſon, and the meanneſs of himſelf the offender; but his wrath is more juſtified when it is poured out upon thoſe whom he hath endured with much long ſuffering. There is no plea againſt the ſhooting of his arrows into thoſe, for whom this voice hath been loud, and his arms open for their return. As patience, while it is exerciſed, is the ſilence of his juſtice, ſo when it is abuſed, it ſilenceth men's complaints againſt his juſtice. The riches of his forbearance made way for the manifeſting the treaſures of his wrath. If God did but a little bear with the inſolencies of men, and cut them off after two or three ſins, he would not have opportunity to ſhew either the power of his patience, or that of his wrath; but when he hath a right to puniſh for one ſin, and yet bears with them for many, and they will not be reclaimed, the ſinner is more inexcuſable, divine juſtice leſs chargeable, and his wrath more powerful, Rom. ix. 22, *What if God, willing to ſhew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction?* The proper and immediate end of his long-ſuffering, is to lead men to repentance, but after they have by their obſtinacy, fitted themſelves for deſtruction, he bears longer with them, to magnify his wrath more upon them, and if it is not the *finis operantis*, it is at leaſt the *finis operis*, where patience is abuſed. Men are apt to complain of God, that he deals hardly with them; the

Iſraelites

Iſraelites ſeem to charge God with too much ſeverity, to caſt them off, when ſo many promiſes were made to their fathers for their perpetuity and preſervation, which is intimated, Hoſ. ii. 2, *Plead with your mother, plead*; by the double repetition of the word plead, do not accuſe me of being falſe, or too rigorous, but accuſe your mother, your church, your magiſtracy, your miniſtry, for their ſpiritual fornications which have provoked me: I have borne with her under many provocations, and I have not yet taken away all her ornaments, or ſaid to her according to the rule of divorce, *res tuas tibi habeto*. God anſwers their impudent charge, *She is not my wife, nor am I her huſband*; he doth not ſay firſt, I am not her huſband, but ſhe is not my wife; ſhe firſt withdrew from her duty, by breaking the marriage covenant, and then I ceaſed to be her huſband. No man ſhall be condemned, but he ſhall be convinced of the due deſert of his ſin, and the juſtice of God's proceeding. God will lay open men's guilt, and repeat the meaſures of his patience, to juſtify the ſeverity of his wrath, Hoſ. vii. 10, *Sins will teſtify to their face*. What is in its own nature a preparation for glory, men by their obſtinacy make a preparation for a more indiſputable puniſhment. We ſee many evidences of God's forbearance here, in ſparing men under thoſe blaſphemies which are audible, and thoſe prophane carriages which are viſible, which would ſufficiently juſtify an act of ſeverity; yet when men's ſecret ſins both in heart and action, and the vaſt multitudes of them, far ſurmounting what can arrive to our knowledge here, ſhall be diſcovered, how great a luſtre will it add, to God's bearing with them, and make his juſtice triumph without any reaſonable demur from the ſinner himſelf! he is long-ſuffering here, that his juſtice may be more public hereafter.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, The Uſe.

It is a vaſt comfort to any, when God is pacified towards them; but it is ſome comfort to all, that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory ſinner. His continued patience to all, ſpeaks a poſſibility of the cure of all, would they not ſtand againſt the way of their recovery. It is a terror that God hath anger, but it is a mitigation of that terror, that God is ſlow to it; alas! if he were all fire and ſword upon ſin, what would become of us? We ſhould find nothing elſe but over-flowing deluges, or ſweeping peſtilences, or perpetual flaſhes of Sodom's fire and brimſtone from heaven. He dooms us not preſently to execution, but gives us a long breathing time after the crime, that by retiring from our iniquities, and having recourſe to his mercy, he may be withheld for ever from ſigning a warrant againſt us, and change his legal ſentence into an evangelical pardon. It is a ſpecial comfort to his people, that he is a ſanctuary to them, Ezek. xi. 16; a place of refuge, a place of ſpiritual communications; but it is ſome refreſhment to all in this life, that he is a defence to them: for ſo is his patience called, Numb. xiv. 9, *Their defence is departed from them*; ſpeaking to the Iſraelites, that they ſhould not be afraid of the Canaanites, for their defence is departed from them. God is no longer patient to them, ſince their ſins be full and ripe. Patience as long as it laſts, is a temporary defence, to thoſe that are under the wing of it; but to the believer it is a ſingular comfort; and God is called the God of patience and conſolation in one breath, Rom. xv. 5, *The God of patience and conſolation grant you to be like-minded*—all interpreters underſtand it effectively. The God that inſpires you with comfort, and cheers you with comfort, grant this to you. Why may it not be underſtood formally, of the patience belonging to the nature of God? and though it be expreſt

expreſt in the way of petition, yet it might alſo be propoſed as a pattern for imitation, and ſo ſuits very well to the exhortation laid down, ver. 1, which was to *bear with the infirmities of the weak*; which he preſſeth them to, ver. 3, *by the example of Chriſt*; and ver. 5, *by the patience of God to them*, and ſo they are very well linked together. God of patience and conſolation may well be joined, ſince patience is the firſt ſtep of comfort to the poor creature. If it did not adminiſter ſome comfortable hopes to Adam, in the interval between his fall and God's coming to examine him, I am ſure it was the firſt diſcovery of any comfort to the creature, after the ſweeping the deſtroying deluge out of the world, Gen. ix. 21. After the ſavour of Noah's ſacrifice, repreſenting the great ſacrifice which was to be in the world, had aſcended up to God, the return from him is a publication of his forbearing to puniſh any more in ſuch a manner: and though he found man no better than he was before, and the imaginations of men's hearts as evil as before the deluge, that he would not again ſmite every living thing, as he had done. This was the firſt expreſſion of comfort to Noah, after his exit from the ark; and declares nothing elſe but the continuance of patience to the new world, above what he had ſhewn to the old.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

Should these Discourses meet a favourable reception with the Public, and suitable encouragement given, it is the Editor's intention to re-publish "CHARNOCK'S TREATISE ON REGENERATION," *without any material abridgment: a work, in the opinion of judicious and good men of every denomination, without its equal (in the English language, or probably in any other) upon that important and most interesting subject. It would be a proper companion for this volume.*